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# The Conceptualizations of Educators Regarding Multimodal, Embodied Literacy Experiences in Early Years Classrooms Within a French Immersion Context: An Exploratory Case Study

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The Conceptualizations of Educators Regarding Multimodal, Embodied Literacy Experiences in  
Early Years Classrooms Within a French Immersion Context:  
An Exploratory Case Study

by

Sarah Novosel-Ulbrich

A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

Experience with language plays a key role in language development for French immersion students. Multimodal, embodied literacy experiences are critical elements of language growth; thus it is imperative for educators to recognize their role in the development of language learning. Teachers can capitalize on children's playful curiosities, explorations, and creations by recognizing their role in a child's language journey and bringing considerations of children's everyday desires into their pedagogical practice. The purpose of this study was to see how early years (kindergarten and grade 1) educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied learning experiences in their French immersion classrooms. Eight early years teachers were interviewed using semistructured interviews to inquire into their pedagogical practices. All of the teachers discussed the ways in which they create multimodal, embodied experiences to assist their students with language development. However, although the teachers reported affording their students these opportunities, none of them referred to these pedagogical experiences as multimodal or embodied literacies. Finally, teachers did not seem to separate oral or physical experiences from one another; teachers viewed that movement and voice must occur simultaneously for students to grasp the language activity. Lastly, none of the teachers agreed on the specific difficulties experienced by French immersion students, but unanimously stated that there is a substantial lack of resources for immersion educators. This void could be filled by multimodal, embodied literacy practices that students practice naturally throughout the day.

## **Preface**

This doctoral dissertation was created by Sarah Novosel-Ulbrich. Ethics approval was given by the University of Calgary. The ID for this study is REB19-2116. This dissertation was professionally edited by Leslie Prpich from Beyond Words Editing.

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...Look Dad, I am no longer "Nurse Novosel"!

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AIM	accelerative integrated method
ASL	American sign language
CSJ	Campus Saint-Jean
ECSD	Edmonton Catholic School District
ELL	English language learner
FI	French immersion
IB	International Baccalaureate program

## Chapter 1. Introduction to the Study

### Introduction

I remember as a child, sitting on a blue, square carpet, surrounded by other children. There, we were sitting cross-legged, repeating French sentences after the teacher. It felt like forever, and I was stuck there waiting. Waiting to go outside, waiting to understand what I was saying, waiting to move to another grade. We would say the sentences all together, slowly, without expression...

As a student, I was not engaged. As a French immersion (FI) instructor, this is an event that consistently forces me to question what I can do to keep student involvement high. I have always known that language practices need to evolve, and as teachers, we can do better.

This study looks to identify how educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied language in early years French immersion classrooms, using an exploratory case study. This study has also adopted a posthumanist framework from a practitioner approach, meaning that the framework is looking to explore the actions and outcomes of teachers instead of the philosophical meaning and history of posthumanism. Because of this practitioner approach, there will be more examples of what posthumanism looks like in the classrooms from the various participants' perspectives, as well as future possibilities for other language context classrooms. This introduction looks at key components to assist in understanding the research conducted.

This study was conducted in the Edmonton Catholic School District. This school district has six French immersion schools, and six dual-track schools, meaning that there is both a French immersion and English stream program available.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the scope of this study changed. Originally, I was going to visit classrooms and do multiple observations of students in their multimodal, embodied

literacy environments. However, due to the district closing down any form of school visits from outside colleagues, as well as all gatherings (such as meetings and celebrations) being moved to online, I chose to interview Early Years (Kindergarten and Grade 1) teachers, to uncover their conceptualizations of multimodal, embodied experiences within their classrooms.

### **French Immersion in the Edmonton Catholic School District**

French immersion is a content-based program where French is taught in all subjects. Genesee and Shapson (1984) describe immersion programs as, "...children are taught to read, write, spell and do mathematics in French/before they are taught these skills in English. During Kindergarten and the first few months of Grade one, emphasis is placed on developing listening comprehension skills in French" (p.34). In Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) we have early French immersion where students learn French in K to 12 in addition to Late immersion starting at grade 7. For this study, I will focus on early FI. ECSD uses many of the educational resources available, but there is still more that we, as teachers, can do, to better language practices. Ballinger (2015) discusses research that calls for needed change "to be made to the pedagogy within bilingual programs such as immersion" (p. 37) so that it can "purposefully make cross-curricular links between materials taught in both languages to reinforce and deepen students' understanding of content as well as language" (Ballinger, 2015, p. 37). Specialists in FI, such as Lyster (2007), believe that language instruction in programs such as FI should be counterbalanced. Counterbalancing (Lyster, 2007) consists of putting the focus not only on the form (grammar) or the content (e.g., teaching mathematics in French without looking at the language) but on using both so students can learn the language in context while learning the language form (i.e., how languages are structured).

Counterbalancing practices in ECSD range from the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM), to Daily 5. AIM is a program that uses actions to assist in language development (AIM Language Learning, 2017). Each word is assigned an action, and the teacher speaks using the assigned actions, to encourage language development. Daily 5 uses centres and student-driven activities to promote language learning through activities such as writing, listening, speaking, and sharing ideas. I explain these programs or practices further within the review of the literature, as they enhance and provide more opportunities to practice specific outcomes in the curriculum within French language arts.

AIM allows students to practice language through audio recordings and sharing the audio stories through using the actions from the program, as well as the words, to provide evidence of understanding through “mimicking.” FI researchers such as Dagenais, Day, and Toohey (2006) look at different ways students entangle with French. Some of these practices can fall into the multimodal category, though given different titles or placed in varying categories.

### **Multimodal Possibilities in French Immersion**

Teachers can approach curriculum in various ways. The idea that children “engage in everyday activities by drawing on various multilingual, multimodal and multisensory resources available in their local environment” (Hua, Otsuji, & Pennycook, 2017, p. 385) provides many pedagogical directions for many teachers to pursue. Multimodality is the various modes we use to express messages. Colour, shapes, sounds, movement, and even images are the various components that create multimodal experiences (Kress, 2009). Embodiment is how the students take up or use materials to create new learning, or information (Siegel, 2006). Embodiment includes smelling, touching, moving, or *becoming*, a process I explain later.

Up until now, there has been little research on teacher conceptualizations of multimodal, embodied literacy practices in FI classrooms in early years settings. However, research is prevalent in French orality and language exposure through the use of other means, such as music or language patterning. Leith (1979) uses the idea that popular French music may be used as “an integral part of any sophisticated foreign language instruction program, at least for the major cultural languages” (p. 537) to assist in oral development and fluency. Researchers such as Wauquier and Yamaguchi (2013) discuss the French Template, which encourages phonological awareness through the stress of certain syllables or sounds, which many consider to be poetry.

FI educators must consider that “one of the key factors in learning a foreign language is the ability and opportunity to play with it, test its elasticity” (Maley, 1987, p. 94).

Multimodality offers numerous affordances to explore and develop various languages through voice, body, space, objects, and movement in educational settings (Ozen & Mohammadzadeh, 2012). Furthermore, multimodal communication is something that many children naturally engage in, which will allow for easy integration into language classrooms.

Thus, teachers can look to practices that encourage multimodal, embodied experiences to engage, excite, and promote learning.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Early years children in kindergarten and grade one need to learn skills as young kids. This can include everything from learning how to raise their hands to speak, to using scissors, holding pencils correctly and even how to line up at the classroom door. However, in French immersion, they also need to learn the language. With current pedagogical approaches used in my school board such as AIM, Reggio Emilia and *Daily 5*, some students are not gaining the expressive skills expected in the FI program. By better understanding how teachers work with

the students and understand and create embodied, multimodal practices for their students, educators may be better equipped to use such methods in informed ways in the classroom.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how educators in early years classrooms conceptualize multimodal, embodied literacy experiences within a French immersion context. The findings will assist current and future educators in understanding what practices are already in place, or what can be done to further support French-language learning in the classroom to every student.

### **Research Question**

For my overarching research question, I asked: How do educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied literacy experiences in early years classrooms, within a French immersion context?

I also considered the following, to support and guide my interview questions:

- How are teachers experiencing and thinking about multimodal and embodied teaching practices?
- How do teachers perceive multimodal and embodied literacy practices as assisting with French Immersion teaching?
- What do teachers perceive as the challenges associated with utilizing multimodal and embodied teaching practices in early years French Immersion?
- How do teachers characterize their students' responses to multimodal and embodied teaching practices?
- Are there some aspects of multimodal and embodied teaching practice that work particularly well to enhance early years French Immersion instruction?



## **Research Design and Overview**

This study interviewed eight teachers from varying school demographics and roles. All participants came from the same school district: ECSD. All teachers worked in early years settings. Early years in ECSD is kindergarten and grade 1. The focus of this study was how educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied literacy experiences in early years French immersion classrooms.

This research used an exploratory case study method. Because this study involved participants with varying teaching experience, education, and demographics, an exploratory case study allowed the flexibility to properly conduct my research without restrictions. With the use of the case study, I also used semistructured interviews, which gave the opportunity to dive deeper with participants, following where the questions naturally guided us.

## **Assumptions**

I assumed that the majority of ECSD students come to the grade 1 classroom with some exposure to French as an additional language. In the ECSD, schools offer a kindergarten French program that allows for early exposure and participation in French, in every FI or dual track setting.

## **Personal Significance**

I began to realize the importance of FI embodied, multimodal practices before I was a teacher. At the time, I worked as an educational assistant in a kindergarten classroom that followed the Reggio Emilia philosophy. There, I witnessed children growing socially, creatively, and as independent thinkers. The students would sing, dance, speak in musical tones, and mimic actions. These are multimodal, embodied experiences, but I just knew them as the Reggio Emilia approaches. These “Reggio” approaches were what I continued to use in my

teaching practices, unaware of the multimodal experiences I was affording the students. As I began my doctorate and was exposed to the various outlets which students need to explore to make connections to their language learning, I could not help but wonder how other educators conceptualize these multimodal, embodied experiences for oral language learning in a FI classroom beyond kindergarten. Through research and the opportunity to attend professional development workshops where provocations and exploration (main features of a Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach) were important topics, my thoughts on educational practices have evolved and I have developed my own ideas as to what might work well in primary-level FI classrooms. While Reggio Emilia provides a helpful framework for early years learning, there is concern that it is unable to provide the more structured opportunities that multimodality can address through mimicking movement, sound, rhythm, and song. Study participant Jennifer supported this concern when she stated:

In French immersion you're a little bit more, um, purposeful. Things are a little bit more contrived. Like, I know when Reggio first came out, I was like, "well, there's no point talking about ocean animals and their body parts when they don't even know their own body parts in the language we're doing" so uh, kind of being more intentional and very specific. (May 14, 2020).

Because Reggio Emilia is more about creating, participating in projects, and collaborating with peers, some of the multimodal, embodied aspects are not interwoven (Katz, 1998). These aspects not being interwoven or discussed within Reggio Emilia was what encouraged me to pursue research regarding how educators conceptualize language acquisition through multimodal, embodied approaches in their classroom environments.

## **The Researcher**

The first moment I realized the importance of multimodality and the embodiment of literacy practices was when I was teaching French verbs. The students could not grasp that a verb was an action word. Tired and frustrated, I jumped up onto the table. The students looked at me in shock, wondering what I was doing. From there, I moved around the room, jumping from table to table, acting out various verbs. The students were engaged, excited, and participating. From then on, we “acted” every day. It brought me to wonder, however, what else I could “act out” to get the students talking, and more importantly, were other teachers aware of this teaching method?

As a child, I participated in the Kiwanis Music Festival for Speech Arts, where I won many awards and titles. A speech arts competition is best described as an individual memorizing poetry or literature and presenting it to three judges. There are many categories within the arts, such as dramatic, lyrical, and Canadian. I decided to share my passion for speech arts with my students, since there was already an interest in “acting” from verb work. One day, after presenting a poem to the students, they were mesmerized, and even quiet. A child who never spoke raised her hand and asked, “When do we get to do that?”

By incorporating movement of the body into poetry, there was a shift in my classroom. This shift, and my new passion, led me first to complete a master’s degree from the University of Portland, where I studied how the recitation of poetry assists in second-language learning, and then to pursue a doctorate in languages and literacy at the University of Calgary.

How early years educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied literacy experiences is crucial in developing language opportunities for students in classrooms. There are already programs that encourage these alternate ways of thinking, such as AIM and Daily 5. Reggio

Emilia allows early learning educators the opportunity to use these methods and create richer experiences for their students through the openness of the programs. I wondered, however, if there was something more natural that children do in their everyday lives that could be incorporated in the classroom to further develop oral fluency?

## Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

French immersion is a content-based program that offers non-French speaking families the opportunity for their child to learn another language. In French immersion, as Genesee and Shapson (1984) previously explain, all subjects are taught in French, and English Language Arts and English skills are not taught until mid-grade two. This is the process that FI schools and dual-track schools in ECSD also follow; all subjects are taught in French, and in the middle of Grade 2, English Language Arts and the appropriate curricular skills are taught. As this research has to do with teacher conceptualizations of multimodal and embodied literacy experiences of young learners in the context of FI classrooms through a posthumanist lens, one must be mindful that “being and knowing, affective and material intra-actions exceed languages and literacies repertoires in pedagogical settings” (Toohey, Smythe, Dagenais & Forte, 2020, p.23). This means that FI teacher experiences will be viewed as more than just occurrences, but as experiences that bring forward opportunities for their students to explore, create and *become*.

As explained earlier, French immersion (FI) programs allow non-French students to learn another language, while keeping the child’s first language development. A child’s first language can be anything, including English. For some students, they may come speaking multiple languages already. This is not seen as a hinderance, but as an asset in immersion programming. However, with varying classroom demographics, some researchers and educators question which practices best target the largest majority of students (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). More specifically, what activities could encourage student engagement and collaborative environments (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012)? Ohta (2001), for example, alludes to students simply needing more time to use their French.

One area of weakness that research identifies in FI programs is that too much attention is given to the subject instead of to the language of instruction (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Lyster, 2017). The goal for FI education is that the child will acquire both language and content skills. Teachers, parents, and stakeholders want students to learn French. Teachers therefore have a responsibility to ensure, not only that a child understands content, but is able to express their comprehension of the content in French, to the best of their ability. This is where the importance of teaching resources or programs is critical.

Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) has a few resources it encourages French immersion teachers to use. Given that the district encourages engaging literacy practices, this literature review touches on some of the resources and supporting research that the district supports. Reggio Emilia, Daily 5, and AIM all have their place in the classroom; however, as the literature reveals, there are other ways of ensuring French language improvement through everyday practices. These practices are multimodal, embodied literacy opportunities that teachers can easily create, even whilst using district-approved resources. In the following, the literature review will focus on teaching practices from scholars that work in the field, including AIM, Reggio Emilia and *Daily 5*.

### **Teaching Practices in kindergarten**

In the following, I will explain AIM and Daily 5 within the context of Reggio-Emilia-inspired programming.

AIM is a program for language learning where students link words to actions to encourage memory opportunities for the student. In this approach, Ohta (2001) explains, “language is not a unique product of just the learner’s individual brain, but of a mind that actively draws on the interactive environment of the setting in which language is used” (p. 4).

This “interactive environment” is critical for a child in an immersion program, because it is another way for the student to remember various words, tied to the actions, to assist them in the communication process. This process differs for a first language learner, where, unless there is an underlying learning disability, the words come to mind before the action.

Daily 5 sets out the roles of the teachers and students, suggesting that educators change “the atmosphere in [their] rooms and [their] own roles, from trying to ‘manage’ students, rushing around the room putting out fires, to creating routines and procedures that [foster] independent literacy behaviours that [are] ingrained to the point of being habits” (Boushey & Moser, 2006, p. 9). Students practice these habits through specific activities, such as reading to themselves, reading to someone else, working on writing, listening to reading, and spelling / word work (Boushey & Moser, 2006, pp. 11–12).

Though the concepts of Daily 5 and AIM have some aspects that are positive, there are ways in which these two programs are not as beneficial to immersion classrooms as they could be. This opinion comes from personal experience as well as discussion with colleagues. Both Daily 5 and AIM tend to use language that is not adequate for FI, as it is designed for the use of francophone (students whose first language is French) language or expressions the program uses, making it too advanced. Furthermore, the Daily 5 program, if done correctly, takes an entire day to complete. When mathematics, science, and social studies need to be taught and a program of study is not cross-curricular, this isn’t possible.

Because of the shortcomings I note regarding AIM and Daily 5, for this research study, I opened up discussions with teachers through interviews to consider all different types of resources so as to obtain a richer understanding of what the teachers were doing that

demonstrated their conceptualizations of multimodal, embodied literacy experiences in their classrooms.

### **Reggio Emilia**

Reggio Emilia is the program of choice for both French and English programs within ECSD, for every early years classroom (kindergarten to grade 1). The program encourages children to develop naturally within a nonconventional classroom environment. The Reggio Emilia approach originated in Italy, in a small town known as Reggio Emilia (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). The approach comes from a particular educational philosophy that children are competent and capable of leading their own educational journeys (Edwards et al., 1998). The program still exists in the original location 50 years later, and *all* children aged 6 and under are encouraged to attend. Students with special needs or disabilities are also participants in the program, receiving full support to be successful in their learning (Edwards et al., 1998). Learning centres, or learning processes, are student driven, and students are equals in their educational journey. Because students are their own academic guides, it introduces a pedagogical shift, based on the idea “that all children are capable, competent, powerful learners who bring to the school valuable theories and hypotheses of their own that are worthy of investigation” (Shelley & Flessner, 2013, p. 645). Therefore, inclusive education is possible in this program. Furthermore, “the teachers know how to listen to children, how to allow them to take initiative, yet how to guide them in productive ways” (Edwards et al., 1998, p. xiv). Children are responsible for asking questions, exploring materials, and creating. Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (1998) refer to this process as children’s “languages,” which include “the expressive, communicative, symbolic, cognitive, ethical, metaphorical, logical [and] imaginative” (p. 7). The teacher’s role is to supply the necessary tools or resources for the children to explore, inquire, and learn.



The Reggio approach stems from four major thoughts of thinking: European and American strands of progressive education; Piagetian constructivist and Vygotskian sociohistorical psychologies; Italian postwar left-reform politics; and European postmodern philosophy (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 8). There is also a cultural aspect, which weaves its way through the four main concepts of this program. Throughout Europe, there is ample respect for the Reggio Emilia approach, with educators travelling from all over to observe, reflect and bring ideas back to implement within their own districts (Edwards et al., 1998).

For over a decade, all early years programs in ECSD have used the Reggio Emilia approach. This program not only changes the teachers' style of teaching but encourages the classroom environment to evolve. For example, Reggio-inspired classrooms have lamps instead of harsh LED classroom lights. There is a large use of wood and natural materials, such as cork. There are many nooks with beanbag chairs or mini couches for children who wish to be comfortable, as well as higher spaces, such as lofts. These different areas and experiences are said to offer students different perspectives of the room. Mercillott (2001) explains this educational shift as the learner having rights, including the right to explore, question, discuss, and discover. Children are social beings, and can construct various forms of knowledge, acting as researchers through question and discovery. The role of the teacher is to be an active learner and participant with the child and to create situations that allow the child to explore or question to deepen their understanding. Documentation is a large part of the process, with the goal of sharing the various ways children learn and contribute to the classroom and the school community.

Though the ethos of Reggio Emilia works in some ways to foster a rich language-learning environment, it is through personal experience that I feel immersion students need more direction

and adequate exposure to the French language. This idea is also evident in the interview responses from this research. Students normally enter kindergarten with a vocabulary of around 2,000 to 6,000 words in their first language (L1), whereas immersion students often will come with little experience, or words, in the language of instruction (Belisle, 1997, p. 1). Because of this, many teachers spend as much time as possible in the second language (L2) to immerse students in a rich language environment. This is precisely why districts such as ECSD are choosing to use AIM and Daily 5. These programs ensure that both the teacher and students spend as much time as possible in the language of instruction through precreated activities and routines. Williams and Tedick (2008) refer to this time spent in the L2 as “time on task” (p. 36). However, Caine and Caine (1990) conclude that what educators need is to have multiple methods, resources, or approaches available to pull from. Williams and Tedick (2008), who suggest that educators “risk under-attending to the full range of diverse learning needs that exist in many Immersion classrooms” (p.14), also support this need for multiple resources.

Thus, this brings forth the idea of multimodality through language embodiment opportunities, and the importance of educators’ conceptualizations of these methods. By using rhyme, song, and movement, students will receive more direct instruction but will have the opportunity to explore, through the use of space and materials, which piques student interest. When students use rhyme, song, or movement, there is opportunity to create, and *become*. This *becoming* is what will allow students to make connections to past and present experiences within their new language and allow for a deeper understanding due to the use of various outlets.

It is imperative, therefore, for ECSD teachers to create an environment and learning opportunities that fall under the philosophy of Reggio Emilia but have sufficient direction for students to acquire the necessary skills for FI. I argue that multimodal, embodied language and

literacy learning practices will encourage this, by providing a balance between exploration and routine.

### **Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Practices**

Presently, there appears to be little research on teachers' conceptualizations regarding multimodal, embodied literacy practices in French classrooms with the exception of Multimodal Instruction in Pre-Kindergarten: An introduction to an inclusive early language program, which occurred in the USA by Peker and Regalla (2016). However, this study will be looking at Division 1, which is considered Kindergarten to grade 3. However, the concept of student understanding and use of these practices is present in terms of core French (optional French courses) in articles by Lotherington and Jenson (2011). Core French findings, however, demonstrate that “there was a cross-language transfer of phonological awareness and word reading from English to French, and cross-language relationship between English receptive vocabulary and French receptive vocabulary for both groups” (Au-Yeung, 2009, p. 43). Because of this lack of research, especially when considering the conceptualizations of educators regarding these multimodal, embodied practices, much of the information that guides this study came from nonimmersion classrooms.

Multimodality is a concept originating from Gunther Kress, the scholar who “pioneered and continues to play a decisive role in shaping the field of multimodality” (Kress, 2009, p. x). Other scholars, such as Carey Jewitt (2008), discuss how society and capitalism influence how we give and receive messages.

Jewitt (2008) argues that in a contemporary multimedia communicational world, it is impossible to consider literacy a “linguistic accomplishment” (p. 241) as print-based literacy must now give way to other factors, such as image, sound, action, and colour. Jewitt (2008)

believes that the representation and sharing of messages is what shapes the learning of individuals. In his view, “the ways in which something is represented shape both what is to be learned, that is, the curriculum content, and how it is to be learned” (p. 241). Therefore, Jewitt believes one must acknowledge the importance of not only the message behind the words, but the message behind the other ranges of multimodal communication, such as vocal tone or movement. This consideration forces one to consider student interests, current events, or personal beliefs when wanting to “shape” the curricular content to engage students.

The application of multimodal, embodied practices in immersion classrooms is possible because literacy, and what specialists such as Kress consider to be literacy, has evolved (Bearne, 2009). What is meant by literacy “evolving” is that it comes in multiple forms, including signs, pictures, colours, movement, and more. Because of this evolution in multiple cultures or languages, the application of new practices is possible. Before, literacy was simply seen as the ability to read words or understand read words with the correct intent and meaning. Now, literacy has become much more than words and understanding words; literacy is exploring various mediums to accept a wide array of possibilities for what extends beyond the page. This extension and meaning is what creates the possibilities of language embodiment and multimodality in the classroom, which is the basis of this study. Throughout the interview, the teacher reflects on the teaching practices, resources, centres, or activities that challenge the use of multimodal, embodied practices to encourage language acquisition.

The focus of the participant interviews was the organic or planned multimodal, embodied experiences that occur. I chose this focus because recent studies demonstrate the importance of incorporating one’s body, as well as multimodality, to accelerate the process of language acquisition. Though this seems to be a new concept, Siegel (2006) argues that children always

engage in these practices. This is further reinforced by Hua, Otsuju, and Pennycook (2017), who believe that all occurrences of day-to-day life “employ a broad understanding of social semiotics that includes body, space, gesture, senses and objects” (p. 383). Teachers who *think* that they have had little exposure to multimodality or embodiment may feel intimidated or overwhelmed, because of the lack of understanding of what these practices are. However, as Siegel (2006) points out, all, at some point, have engaged in multimodal embodiment practices. Teachers’ feeling of overwhelm is due to needing to know not only curricular content but also actions or activities that engage more than just memorization or daily routine. However, educators must remember that “social, cultural, and economic worlds now require facility with tests and practices involving the full range of representational modes” (Siegel, 2006, p. 65). This means that for students to be engaged, we need to use their means of communication. Students need opportunities to explore literacy through gestures, music, technology, pictures, and other interests, which could include the creation of iMovies or art. These forms of exploration are just as relevant as language practices (Siegel, 2006).

For example, both music and poetry are in the curriculum; however, many teachers are not comfortable enough to teach them. This is because, as Carter (2012) explains, it includes an understanding of “listening/speaking/reading/memorizing/creatively conversing and conferencing/expressively engaging/composing [and] performing” (p. 5). It also uses movement, and the process of students becoming whatever they are speaking or singing about. This becoming, which is the embodied practice within the multimodal activity, is what creates ownership in the child’s learning, creating literacy fluency and comprehension (Cudak, 2014).

It is important for teachers to understand that students all have various paces at which they learn, none of which are identical to another. Kress (2004) argues that adults hold an

expectation that children must move into adult language before first exploring their own, as adults feel that they have more power or experience than the child does. This type of thinking eliminates multimodal opportunities, as multimodality does take a certain type of creativity and freedom for the child to create their own learning experiences. Kress (2004) believes that when social constraints are strong, personal interest is at its highest. Thus, we need to encourage students to use modes to create meaning. This would tie into song, or acoustics, as discussed by Fabbro (2013). Kress (2004) describes modes as “lots of different ‘stuff’” (p. 7) that we use to make our signs. This can be anything from music, voices, our bodies, or the various materials around us. Specifically, for this research, the mode of focus was the body, signs, various materials, things, or other means that students find interesting.

Multimodality and embodiment opportunities are part of what creates inspiration in students. Kuby and Rucker (2015) explore this concept through various forms of literacy and their representations in their book *Go Be a Writer! Expanding the Curricular Boundaries of Literacy Learning with Children*. Here, readers take a journey of how the various forms of literacy entangle in student interests and assist in a child’s motivation, interest, and engagement. The purpose of this book is to provide “a significant departure from literacy-based ways of approaching and writing” (p. 2) through a posthuman lens that considers the importance of the body in living and learning. Snaza and Weaver (2014) write that posthumanism “might reconfigure classroom practice and curriculum” when educators allow an evolution to occur with their teaching practices (p. 9). What this means is that teachers should not only allow but encourage children in classrooms to play, explore, collaborate, and experiment with items or ideas. This, however, is difficult for educators if they are not aware of the terminology or see the opportunities in everyday classroom life.

I explore concepts of posthumanism that relate to my study further within this dissertation. However, some concepts Kuby and Rucker use, originally from Deleuze, that are applicable to this study are rhizomes and lines of flight, which are the “unexpected” ways one can practice literacy. *Rhizomes* are “about connections and difference—no two connections are the same. Something new is always being produced” (Kuby & Rucker, 2015, p. 32). Thus, a child’s experiences are rhizomes. The changes the child makes, or where the activity breaks off and turns into something else, are the *lines of flight*. Rhizomes and lines of flight are crucial in immersion settings, as the teacher has to move out of a zone of comfort to fulfill the needs, requests, or interests of the students, to attain or grasp their attention through the *intra-action* with materials or things. Barad, in an interview with Kleinman (2012), describes intra-action in depth:

Intra-action unsettles the metaphysics of individualism (the belief that there are individually constituted agents or entities, as well as times and places). . . . “individuals” do not preexist as such but rather materialize in intra-action. That is, intra-action goes to the question of the making of differences, of “individuals,” rather than assuming their independent or prior existence. “Individuals” do not *not* exist, but are not individually determinate. Rather, “individuals” only exist within phenomena (particular materialized/materializing relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring. (Barad, interviewed by Kleinman, 2012, p. 77).

This means that intra-action takes the responsibility away from the individual; the materials as well as the surroundings are able to inspire and take responsibility for what has been or will be created.

Through the process of intra-action, students will *become*; that is, their identity shifts as they intra-act with materials, events, or other humans. An example of becoming in a FI setting is a child learning a new song, and, after practice, visuals, and collaborating, sings the song sporadically and becomes a French speaker through this process. Becoming allows students to fully engage in the literacy process in the immersion classroom and experiment with words, actions, or sounds (Kuby & Rucker, 2015). As Kuby and Rucker explore these concepts within the book, they demonstrate the possibilities that embodying and using multimodal expressions in language learning provides.

Because multimodal embodiment activities can include all various landscapes of visual or auditory outlets, educators need to be able to make the choices to decide what will be most beneficial to students in their additional language acquisition. As previously discussed, these types of experiences allow children to become through intra-action, and provide opportunities for language acquisition. Though literature such as *Go Be a Writer!* (Kuby & Rucker, 2015) focuses on English classrooms, it still brings forth the idea that literacy is many things, and we can teach it in many ways.

### **Multimodal, Embodied Practices and Reggio Emilia**

There is little research regarding conceptualizations of educators in kindergarten and grade 1 classrooms regarding multimodal or embodied literacy practices in FI settings. Because of this, one needs to consider how newer practices could improve French language acquisition within district expectations of teaching in a Reggio Emilia environment. Improvement occurs through allowing children to explore, intra-act, become, and desire, which occurs between human and non-human as they entangle with one another.

Exploring is especially important for children because it allows children to assess the “possibilities of the world around them” (Kress, 2004, pp. 33–34). In this study, because I



interviewed teachers with experience in the Reggio Emilia approach, discussions regarding classroom exploration opportunities were possible. Reggio Emilia insists that “the learner possesses rights, is an active constructor of knowledge, and is a social being; the instructor is a collaborator and co-learner along with the child, a guide and facilitator, and a researcher; and knowledge is viewed as being socially constructed, encompassing multiple forms of knowing, and comprised of meaningful wholes” (Hewett, 2001, p. 95). The posthuman understanding of multimodality allows me to consider not only the social learning environment, but also the material.

Intra-action in FI classrooms tends to occur daily, as FI uses physical, natural materials to explore new language or create situations for students to communicate. These intra-active possibilities are evident within the interviews, which provide specific examples of intra-actions. An example of intra-action from Kuby and Rucker (2015) occurs with a student named Riley. Riley creates a paper frog; she then *becomes* the frog. She hops around with it, making noises appropriate to her creation. Both Riley and the frog possess *agency* which they act on. Agency is what happens between the intra-action of person and nonperson. The frog has affected, or piqued Riley’s curiosity, which has encouraged agency intra-action of person and nonperson), and created a shift in Riley’s identity, which is the process of *becoming*. Riley searches for peers that she hopes are willing to play with her. Within second-language classrooms, these types of experiences allow teachers to guide students to learn new vocabulary that is based on student interest, while encouraging creative, literacy-based occurrences.

## **Summary**

It is evident that there is little research done on teacher conceptualizations of multimodal, embodied literacy experiences in FI classrooms, especially in Alberta or Canadian classrooms.

Though we have programs such as AIM and Daily 5, there is still something missing, that is more natural to students, to assist teachers in further influencing language acquisition in their classrooms. Programs such as Reggio Emilia do offer multimodal opportunities, but it appears that teachers have difficulty recognizing these chances and what to do with these “moments.” Based on observations gleaned through this review of the literature, the research undertaken in the present study sought to gain an understanding of teacher conceptualizations of embodied, multimodal opportunities, and what these opportunities look like. We have seen these opportunities in examples given by Riley and the frog, however, this research looks to uncover what the participants view as multimodal, embodied experiences for their students, and their understandings of its importance within the context of an FI classroom. In the following chapter, I describe the methodology I used for my research.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

### Introduction and Overview

Posthumanism is an open theoretical framework that allows for alternate understandings of everyday occurrences (Pennycook, 2016). Children playing dress-up, creating with clay, and even using basic materials to create something different have great meaning in posthumanism. Because creation is a pivotal piece of early years' experiences, it seems fitting to select a theoretical framework that accepts creativity and, more importantly, the unknown or unplanned, of what is possible. Buttons becoming counting tools, puppets inspire discussion and learning experiences, and acting and engaging with what appears to be the impossible allows new meaning to occur in research and deepens our understanding of what education *could* be.

### Theoretical Framework

Posthumanism allows researchers to question possibilities in educational settings through evaluating the entanglements of people, things, spaces, and agency. Wolfe (2010) discusses how posthumanism allows us “to describe the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social significations, and affective investments with greater specificity once we have removed meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection and so on” (p. xxv). However, to some, posthumanism is more than simple entanglements; it is a construction of relationships (Snaza & Weaver, 2014). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) believe that the idea of posthumanism is not a new notion, especially when considering Indigenous peoples. Indigenous belief has always been that living and nonliving matter are all connected and influence one another. The entanglements and agency are unavoidable. Going back to a practitioner approach, this is viewed through the example with Riley and the frog, as well as what parents or teachers may witness daily. Students or children pretending and playing

dress-up, playing school or even detective are all examples of posthumanism in practice, encouraging the children to *become*.

A major question in classrooms is “What do we want education to do?” (Snaza & Weaver, 2014). Many believe that it is to educate *humans*. However, posthumanist perspectives do not just consider what the human needs to know, but how other areas or their materials (science, social studies, language arts, etc.) can affect or inspire the learner. This is where the ideas of intra-action and agency come in, as it is not just the human making the choices with the materials, but the materials and the human inspiring the other to create something new and diverse. The hyphen in the middle of a word, such as intra-action, demonstrates the “in-betweenness” of what is occurring with the people, things, time, materials, or space. The example given by Kuby and Rucker (2015) is that of a young child playing in the sandbox. The child is sitting and touching the sand, while the concept of play takes place between the sand and the child.

Affect often sparks agency, which acts as inspiration or feelings of curiosity. The inspiration that intra-action produces creates a desire to pull from various matter and create, which is known as *assemblages of desire* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1997). These moments cannot be “prepared, planned and supervised” (Olsson, Dahlberg, & Theorell, 2016, p. 720). These *desirings*, however, occur between humans and nonhumans as they entangle.

Humans and nonhumans in *entanglement* creates “truths, realities, knowledges and relationships” (Kuby & Rowsell, 2017, p. 285). Thus, in posthumanism, rather than wondering what education should do, the teacher provides a statement, such as “Education will make the kind of human who can...” (Snaza & Weaver, 2014, p. 2). Humans must allow themselves opportunities of inspiration, and cocreate with the *things/matter* around them. Please note that

within this research, things/matter can represent materials, technology, animals, or anything else in the educational space.

Posthumanists refute the idea that humans are on a higher level than other things. People and things intra-act. Snaza and Weaver (2014) give a clear example of how posthumanists should not think: “Humans can think, animals cannot; humans can use language, animals do not; humans have souls, animals do not; and humans are rational, and animals are instinctual” (p. 2). In other words, posthumanism seeks to move beyond binary opposites.

A posthumanist perspective offers the idea that we entangle with each other, and entangle in all (living, nonliving, material, matter) that surrounds us (Kuby & Rowsell, 2017). Everyday examples of entanglement and intra-activity can be seen in the classroom: A child dresses up as an astronaut or princess; a child creates a treasure box or creature. Even the use of Play-Doh is a *thing* that makes up a larger relational, ontological interaction. It is not just in classrooms with children where intra-action and the entanglement between humans and things take place. When considering shops and markets, for example, the importance of “material objects (clementines, celery), taste, activity and language come together in particular assemblages in these shops and markets” (Hua et al., 2017, p. 386). When individuals try, smell, or touch these items, they become their experience (Kuby & Rowsell, 2017). A man tries celery, the celery inspires him, and he becomes a cook. He intra-acts with the celery, moving it around as he cuts it, visualizing his dish. The celery, as it rests precariously on the cutting board, allows the cook to cut in a unique way, changing the shape or presentation of what the dish will be. Another individual questions a price or location of an item grown or reflects on previous experiences with an item and is a barterer, or storyteller (Hua et al., 2017). These items, from a humanist standpoint, take shape and change by the individual using them. However, from the posthumanist standpoint, the

items educate the individual, creating something new and unique. The thing inspires the person and the person creates a new thing, using that thing due to desire. Assemblages of desire give “a different sort of sensation that cannot be subsumed by the language and linguistic categories” (Olsson et al., 2016, p. 720). Furthermore, Wise (2013) suggests that assemblage, “as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, is a concept dealing with the play of contingency and structure, organization and change” (p. 91). Desire, however, allows various forms of emotion, which is what inspires the individual to create.

*Conditions of possibility* are the spaces that create *desirings*, allowing a child to create. Each teacher interviewed in this research discussed the conditions or spaces within the classroom, though I did not use this specific language. Deleuze and Guattari make clear that desire and assemblages are always together during the process of creation (Kuby & Rucker, 2016). As discussed earlier, the approaches used by ECSD, such as Reggio Emilia, encourage unique spaces to foster creativity for the child—spaces that one may label as smooth spaces (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe *smooth spaces* as being open; they are vast spaces with few distractions. Conditions of possibility impact the intra-action and becoming of students, as they can both hinder or encourage desire or agency. A patterned carpet, for example, is an excellent smooth space in the classroom that offers lots of colour and possibilities. Students can move freely and comfortably and, through their agency and the desire the carpet creates, can turn the space into whatever they choose. One day it could be the ocean, the next day a village. Therefore, one should consider the conditions of possibilities when developing spaces.

When using posthumanism as a theoretical framework, it is important to acknowledge the process of collecting and organizing data. MacLure (2013) believes that though coding is a

necessity in qualitative research, it also carries dangers. Her thoughts on coding derive from Deleuze and his assessment of coding, which he called *representation* (MacLure, 2013). With coding, there tends to be naturally occurring categories to assist in categorization. One category would be observations, responses, stories, interactions, or interviews. The next category looks for specific patterns through categorization. Lastly, the researcher eliminates data through the categorization process (MacLure, 2013). The issue with representation is that it is a way to classify things; animals, things, matter, people, or anything surrounding us is classifiable. This, then, goes against the concept of assemblages, as representation disallows “entanglement, or unholy mixture, of language and materiality” (MacLure, 2013, p. 165). In response to these concerns, MacLure (2013) suggests another form of coding, termed the “cabinet of curiosities” (MacLure, 2013, p. 165).

The cabinet of curiosities, known in German as *Wunderkammer*, is a collection of artifacts, or data, so different from one another that “they find a comfortable space for a definition only within an academic cabinet of curiosities” (Arnold, 2012, p. 238). Thus, depending upon the researcher, the participants, and the types of data, evidence occurs in the process.

The concept of cabinets of curiosity came from a time of education, in Europe, where special items were placed in cabinets with little connection to one another (Arnold, 2012). These items tended to be artifacts of importance, due to history or monetary value. There were several components to the cabinet of curiosity: First, it demonstrated the wealth of the individual who had purchased these artifacts through travel, or otherwise. Next, it alluded to the idea that the owner of the cabinet could evoke important discussions to demonstrate his knowledge, and that those invited over for discussion were also men of refined taste (Arnold, 2012). According to

Arnold (2012), “it was also a space that called for discussion and debate about objects, allowing certain gravitas of intellect to be the focus of the after-dinner entertainment rather than gossip, cards or less educative or more speculative activities” (Arnold, 2012, p. 239).

The concept of a cabinet of curiosities is an important part of the posthumanist approach to the collection and demonstration of data for my study, because it allows—in fact, encourages—data to be “chaotic” and have “serendipitous connections” (Arnold, 2012, p. 241). This concept works especially well when interviewing educators because each participant has varying education, classroom experience, and resources. Because of this, we may always anticipate a certain amount of unpredictability during interview responses. Furthermore, teachers create multimodal, embodied experiences differently, and have different views on resources, varying materials, contrasting demographics, and a range of world experiences. In this study, data was only considered to be present in the cabinet of curiosities if the responses were all completely unique from one another and had a profound influence on the research, demonstrating that there is more to this research topic than the current question which I discuss. This is all that goes into the cabinet of curiosities due to the nature of the cabinet only considering distinct phenomena, with no relationship to anything, other than the concept that something erratic or eccentric has occurred.

As discussed below, I employed a case study methodology for this study. Case study supports the use of a posthuman cabinet of curiosities with its chaotic organization of data. This is because a case study can “emphasize designing the study to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it” (Stake, 2005, Abstract).

Moreover, case studies also look at distinct phenomena; this allowed the teachers who participated in this study to showcase how each classroom setting is unique and stems from



participant personal experiences and the availability of materials. This flexibility, and the affordances posthumanism provides, allowed the cabinet of curiosities to maintain its unique feature of displaying the varying data the teachers provided.

## **Research Design**

### ***Case Study***

For my research methodology, I used an exploratory case study. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe case studies as “the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction within their world” (p. 3). Because researchers use case studies in interactions where ideas and meaning are socially constructed, teacher conceptualizations regarding what is occurring in their classroom environments open opportunities that, in Stake’s (2012) view, “are attached to the naturalistic, holistic, cultural, and phenomenological paradigms” (p. 380). Thus, teachers working in a multimodal language classroom make excellent candidates for an exploratory case study.

This case study looked at how French immersion (FI) teachers conceptualized multimodal, embodied literacy practices in her kindergarten and grade 1 classroom, which ECSD considers to be early years. Because I wanted to uncover how the FI participants conceptualized multimodal, embodied literacy within their classrooms, the study was unique and in-depth. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005), uniqueness and depth are necessary pieces for an exploratory case study (p. 330). Thomas (2015) also suggests using case studies, but only if the researcher is willing to “drill down” (p. 4), that is, to look at the research subject in a specific, in-depth manner (p. 3). Case studies are not to be general but specific and able to take various directions or have various “degrees of freedom” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 28). With a

set of flexible questions, I could interview the participants, but also ask further questions, if necessary.

Multimodality and embodiment include music, rhyme, movement, gestures, materials and various text landscapes, which brought forth my research question: How do educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied literacy in early years FI classrooms?

### ***Research Sample***

For this study, I used a convenience sample and a purposeful sampling technique. It was convenient because the educators in this study are ones with whom I have taught or whom I knew through professional development sessions or observation opportunities. It was also convenient because I currently work for ECSD, which made me more aware of the teachers' procedures and regulations, especially as I had already had the opportunity to conduct research during my master's degree within ECSD. This experience allowed for easy communication and trust between the researcher and participants without complications. This sampling was also purposeful because I could collaborate with educators with whom I had already built a relationship, which allowed for the data collection to occur more quickly and perhaps more easily. Other considerations I had to think about were teachers who would be open to multimodal, posthuman concepts, who taught in a cross-curricular manner, and who were passionate about pedagogical shifts that improve students' achievement. This "achievement" refers to what the teacher does to integrate district initiatives and to use creativity to motivate students and raise levels of engagement.

### ***Ethics Review and Approval***

I received ethics approval from the University of Calgary in conjunction with the Faculties Research Ethics Board, as well as ECSD. Once ethics approval was given through

Institutional Research Information Services Solutions, I had to forward the completed documents to ECSD. I then had to apply for approval through the district, and, once approval was received, I was able to begin.

### ***Participant Recruitment***

Participants were recruited after ethics approval was given by both the University of Calgary and ECSD. Approval was also given to use ECSD’s name within this research study. After this approval was received, I could contact teachers by phone using a created, approved script. I was unable to email teachers because ECSD prohibits the use of work email to request teacher participation of any kind for research purposes. Once teachers demonstrated an interest, I sent each teacher a consent letter, outlining the specifics of my research, as well as the various degrees of participation, such as choosing to include or not include evidence towards the artifacts section. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were readily available to conduct interviews soon after initial contact was made. Teachers who wished to participate could give dates and times that worked best with their schedules, often after school team meetings or in the evenings.

### ***Participants in the Study***

Eight teachers, all of whom worked for ECSD, participated in the research study and responded to semistructured interview questions. In order for these participants to remain anonymous, pseudonyms were given, and the schools or locations of the individuals were not shared within the data collection process. The eight educators ranged in teaching experience, as listed in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1. Years of Teaching Experience**

5–10 years of teaching experience	1 participant
11–20 years of teaching experience	5 participants

More than 20 years of teaching experience	2 participants
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It is also important to mention that not all participants in this study were anglophone; many, in fact, were francophone. This shaped their knowledge of the French language as well as their methods of instruction. I considered participants francophone for this research if either they or their parent(s) spoke French as a first language, as this is what the Government of Alberta uses as its criteria.

**Table 3.2. Participants’ Linguistic Background**

Francophone	5 participants
Anglophone	3 participants
Other	0 participants

Regarding the demographics, some of the participating teachers taught in schools where the students came from mid to high socioeconomic status (SES) families, with parents who were doctors, lawyers, or professors. A couple of the participating teachers taught in an area with extremely low SES situations, where there was low-income housing across the street and a lunch and snack program for students in need. Lastly, the consultant for grade 1 to 3 French immersion travelled between schools and worked in schools serving students from a full range of SES situations. She ran professional development for teachers, assisted with lesson planning, modelled teaching practices, and collaborated with other consultants and administration to assist in improving French education.

**Table 3.3. Demographics of the Participants' Schools**

Mid to high socioeconomic status	5 participants
Low socioeconomic status	2 participants
Not applicable	1 participant

Though all eight teachers had an education degree or certification, some teachers had more than one degree, and their majors ranged from economics and psychology to sciences. Table 3.4 below provides detailed information regarding the highest level of educational training that the teachers in this study had received.

**Table 3.4. Participants' Highest Level of Education**

Bachelor of education degree (4 years)	2 participants
After degree in education (2 years)	1 participant
Master of education degree (2+ years)	3 participants
Teacher college/training (Ontario)	2 participants

As Table 3.4 demonstrates, two participants had a Bachelor of Education degree from the local Francophone university. One participant had an after degree in education (from a local university). Out of the eight participants, three held a master's degree in education (from various accredited universities) and two participants had received their teaching accreditation from various teachers' colleges in Ontario, in which case extra credits must be taken in Alberta to teach in FI.

## ***Data Collection***

Below I discuss the two main ways in which I collected data for my exploratory case study: interviews and artifacts. Because of the nature of this study, however, I was open to other evidence.

**Interviews.** I collected data through interviews because it best met the demands of what this research required. Interviews are an excellent way to uncover qualitative data, especially when the research aims to “understand the interviewee’s subjective perspective of a phenomenon rather than generating generalizable understandings of large groups of people” (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019, p. 1002). Because I was trying to gain perspective on the conceptualizations of teachers during their classroom “phenomena,” which I considered to be the embodiment of language through varying multimodal facets, I believed that individual interviews were best to capture each teacher reliving these experiences. Furthermore, individuals tend to be more forthcoming when there has already been a rapport built (McGrath et al., 2019). Due to the nature of my relationship with many of these colleagues, this made the interviews occur with ease and honesty and encouraged the participants to be more truthful about their experiences.

The point of each interview was to identify how each teacher perceived multimodal, embodied literacy experiences within the French immersion classroom, followed by how students take up and engage in multimodal practices, as well as the impact these experiences have on language acquisition in the classroom. Individual interviews are important because stories are purposeful and allow researchers to see what the person is experiencing (Hardin, 2003). Both my supervisor, as well as the Ethics Board in conjunction with University of Calgary, approved the interview questions.

At the beginning of the study, I set up times for meetings on Microsoft Teams to administer the interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were only allowed to be conducted via Microsoft Teams in accordance with ECSD research policies. Microsoft Teams transcribed each recording after each interview. Since University of Calgary and ECSD approved of Microsoft Teams without any restrictions when it came to the use of the program, I knew I could use the program to transcribe interviews freely, without having signatures from participants because it was a platform that both the University of Calgary and ECSD fully support. After each interview, the program sent a transcription to my ECSD email. Below, in Table 3.5, I include a timeline of the eight interviews.

**Table 3.5 Interview Timeline & Information**

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>INTERVIEW METHOD</b>	<b>DISTRICT ROLE</b>
Andrée	May 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Teacher—Kindergarten
Jennifer	May 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Lead Teacher/ Teacher—Kindergarten
Chloé	May 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Teacher—Previously taught Kindergarten and Grade 1
Raquel	May 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Consultant— Grade 1 to Grade 3
Stella	May 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Teacher—Grade 1
Rachel	May 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Teacher—Grade 1
Annette	May 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Retired teacher—Grade 1
Demi	May 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2020	Microsoft Teams	Teacher—Grade 1

I interviewed each of the eight teacher participants. On average, each interview was between 45 and 65 minutes in length. Though the focus of this study was the teacher, I also asked about student intra-action with objects or materials to gauge student participation in various French activities that teachers purposefully created or that occurred organically.

Classroom activities were discussed within the interview, including both oral and listening language skills learned each day.

The interviews were semistructured in nature, as it looks to uncover the “perceptions, experiences and attitudes of individuals” (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001, p. 219). I also selected a semistructured interview process because it had an outline to follow during the interview process; however, it also allowed for other questions to arise. This was especially crucial with the participants of this study due to their varying roles and experiences. If a participant demonstrated difficulty in answering a question, using semistructured questions allowed me to prompt, or ask the question in a different way that encouraged the participant to better understand the question (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001). Due to the nature of the types of questions that I asked, I assumed that some teachers would need examples, different wording or prompting for a deeper understanding of the type of information this study required. Moreover, due to teachers having varying expertise, I needed flexibility to go off the script to properly collect my data for my cabinet of curiosities.

**Artifacts.** I collected artifacts from the teacher participants that included resources, pictures, planning documents, or handouts they used that incorporated multimodal practices. I examined the teachers’ lesson plans and International Baccalaureate (IB) planners, as well as the interview transcripts. These artifacts assisted me in understanding teachers’ conceptualizations of multimodal, embodied literacy experiences in kindergarten and grade 1 FI classrooms. Due to freedom of information and protection of privacy (FOIP) policy, which governs privacy and access to information in Canada, and ECSD regulations, I was unable to include any photographs that contained images of students. Though the district did not permit videos or pictures of students, I still requested that teachers send photographs of preferred resources, planning



documents, or pictures of the classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic made getting classroom pictures difficult, as there were entry restrictions for classrooms.

I found that participants needed reminders to submit artifacts for the research. Furthermore, because some artifacts were not physical “things”—such as one teacher using American sign language (ASL)—it was difficult to collect all items that might have been important within this study.

### ***Data Analysis***

I had numerous options for interpreting the data from this research. However, because I followed a posthumanist practitioner approach, it was important for me to put its theories to work in my data analysis. This included considering concepts such as *becoming*, *desiring*, and *intra-acting* with materials, environments, or objects. As mentioned earlier, there is no separation or level of importance when using a posthumanist approach, as all things are seen on the same level. This means that people and things are deemed as equally important, and influencing each other, to gain inspiration to create something new. It is also imperative to remember that for me to analyze the data, I needed to collect it consciously and consider all pieces, even those that did not fit.

When analyzing data, researchers in exploratory case studies typically look to increase, not decrease, the amount of data they collect. This is because exploratory case studies look to improve the knowledge within a specific field, which calls for an adequate amount of documentation and results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because this was an exploratory case study using a posthumanist framework, I specifically looked at how teachers conceptualized the embodiment of literacy and multimodal opportunities, including organic and created intra-actions between child and materials.

**Thematic analysis.** I began by reading and rereading the interview transcripts. This led me to come up with a range of themes that I thought fit the various discussions I had with each teacher. I wrote down what I thought were the themes as I went along, and when I felt, after a few readings, that I had captured all the themes possible, I assigned each theme a colour. Once again, I went through the various interview transcripts and highlighted the participant responses, following the legend I had created for the themes. Through colour coding the responses, I was able to see the patterns that arose from participant responses, as well as what responses did not fit into any theme at all.

After finding the themes, I found that there were some pieces that stood out, and were so unique they just didn't seem to fit into a specific place. I placed these pieces into my cabinet of curiosities. Due to some pieces emerging from the data that did not fit into the themes I observed, I thought it would be important to include a section that gives the background of each participant, and I have done this in Chapter 4. Understanding their stories assists in understanding the data.

The most difficult part of analyzing the data was listening to all the videos to correct the transcribing, as each transcription had specific errors or pieces of information missing. This is important, because “the medium, or the material, with which interviewers work is language” (Kvale, 2008, p. 109). Because some participants used French expressions or words, this caused some confusion within the program, and sometimes words or sentences were not accurate. Kvale (2008) believes that paying special attention to the linguistic forms within interviews improves the reliability of that data, as it refines the preciseness of the process. Furthermore, the review of the interviews allowed me to begin to think about the differences and similarities that I saw within the participants. This allowed me to “deconstruct,” and “construct” new meanings and

further my understanding of the teachers' conceptualizations (Kvale, 2008) of multimodal, embodied literacy experiences. Kvale explains:

A deconstructive reading tears a text apart, unsettling concepts it takes for granted; it concentrates on the tensions and breaks off a text, on what a text supports to say, as well as what is not said in the text, on what is excluded by the use of the text's concepts. A deconstructive reading reveals the presuppositions and internal hierarchies of a text and lays open the binary oppositions built into modern thought and language, such as true/false, real/unreal, subjective/objective. Deconstruction does not only decompose a text, but also leads to a re-description of the text. (Kvale, 2008, p. 114)

As the researcher, I was able to deconstruct the text through observing body language, facial expressions, pauses, and even the commonalities in language interviewees used. This allowed me to reconstruct new meaning that contributed to my cabinet of curiosities while I collected data. To deconstruct and construct new meaning properly, I also wanted to ensure that my interviews occurred close enough together that I could remember the key occurrences that happened within the previous interviews.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are important to consider for many reasons, but according to Burton and Steane (2004), one of the more important issues is that the researcher is the face of the university. The point of ethical considerations is to ensure the safety of the participants as well as making participants aware of all the components within the research. Burton and Steane (2004) write:

Research should ensure that people, as interview sample or as case interviewees, are informed of the study and its method and consent, either in writing or implicitly, to the dissemination of the findings. Such consent should not leave the participants willingly or unwillingly in a more vulnerable position. (p. 62)

Burton and Steane (2004) encourage researchers to ask themselves questions such as:

- What is the researcher's role?
- How are the participants being treated throughout the process?
- What are the benefits of conducting this research?
- What would be the risks?

Because I was doing research with participants that I knew, I had to consider the privacy of the participants, as well as how my relationship with the participants could influence the study. However, I was not interviewing to make assumptions about the teacher participants as an evaluator, or to give advice on how the participants should be teaching. I did not discuss teacher choices with other participants. This would go against the Code of Professional Conduct (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2018) that teachers must abide by in Alberta. The Code is a set of policies created to assist teachers in understanding their responsibilities both as educators and as colleagues.

### **Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, it is crucial that the findings emerge from the data and not from researchers' own predispositions (Shenton, 2004). Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) explore the term *trustworthiness*, which is an idea put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1986). The concept of trustworthiness has four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Morse et al., 2002). When using qualitative research methods,

the rigour will change because various realities can occur (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This goes with the posthumanistic lens, as various realities come through events and things. Lincoln and Guba (1986) refer to this as “naturalistic events.” In a way, a classroom is similar, as things are constantly changing. From a posthumanist lens, the assemblages of desire are what will create the various realities as students create and become. Lincoln and Guba write:

The axiom concerned with the nature of reality asserts that there is no single reality on which inquiry may converge, but rather there are multiple realities that are socially constructed, and that, when known more fully, tend to produce diverging inquiry. These multiple and constructed realities cannot be studied in pieces, but only holistically. (p. 17)

Lincoln and Guba (1986) also identify what should be present in research to ensure that credibility, dependability, and confirmability are met.

To ensure credibility, it was imperative that I ensured the validity of the transcriptions and paid attention to the intention of words and grammar (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This meant that I engaged many times with the interviews by listening, writing, and comparing to understand the views of each participant. The researcher must also use what is referred to as “triangulation,” as well as “negative case analysis” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19) to verify the data and continue to be aware of the negative impact that the research may have on the environment or participants.

While findings from case study research are not generalizable, they are transferable. Many are critical of transferability; however Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) consider it to be a crucial part of research due to its open and general nature. They explain, “The transferability of a research finding is the extent to which it can be applied in other contexts and studies. It is thus equivalent to or a replacement for the terms generalizability and external validity” (p. 785).

However, other researchers argue that it is actually quite difficult for transferability to occur. It is dependent upon the situation and source of the research topic. Only by deciding which components are most crucial can a researcher use the findings of another's work (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). For transferability to be adequate, the data must be rich with information that is specific to the research, and cannot be transferred to someone else's work (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Lastly, for confirmability and dependability, "an external audit requiring both the establishment of an audit trail and the carrying out of an audit by a competent external, disinterested auditor" is helpful (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19).

### **Limitations**

All studies have limitations, which Price and Murnan (2004) define as "the systematic bias that the researcher did not or could not control and which could inappropriately affect the results" (p. 66). For this study, one limitation was the lack of research on multimodality in FI classrooms. Though multimodality occurs in everyday life, there is little focus or content focusing on a second-language context. This is for specific reasons. For example:

the teaching and learning processes essentially rely on communication. As the communication landscape shifts, so must every process utilizing it. Secondly, because communication is taught at school mainly through language courses.

Thus, any change in communication also calls for language teaching redefinition.

(Katsarou & Tsafos, 2010, p. 50)

ECSD also had limitations to protect its staff and students. Within research, pictures or video can be extremely beneficial to demonstrate various events that enrich data collection.

Furthermore, there is a way to use pictures or video that respects the students, participants, and

district. To collect data while following ECSD's rules, I would have had to use pictures of objects or things, without the presence of students or participants.

### **Delimitations**

I bound my case (Baxter & Jack, 2008) in a variety of ways. Delimitations are “intentionally introduced into the study design or instrument by the researcher” (Price & Murnan, 2010, p. 66). Price and Murnan (2010) give examples of delimitations such as race, sex, age, region, or ethnicity. It was important to ensure that my study was not too large, thus, I limited the scope of my research by:

- only conducting research within ECSD
- working with eight participants only
- selecting participants who taught in kindergarten and grade 1 FI settings.

### **Summary**

In this study, I used a posthumanist, practitioner approach within an exploratory case study. This methodology offered various possibilities of going beyond the research questions, or answers given, and digging deeper with each participant, allowing for new truths or concepts to be explored without boundaries. This was important due to varying teacher education, experiences, professional development, and the varying styles of teaching; all these pieces played a role in the process of data collection as well as the thematic analysis. In the following chapter, I look at each teacher profile, and explore the important components of FI oral education of each participant.

## Chapter 4. Teacher Profiles

### Introduction

The teacher profiles play an important role within this research. Teacher experiences, education, and educational philosophies shape their professional identities. The teacher profiles are not just contextual; teachers are their backgrounds created by their lived experiences.

Through the profiles, we learn about their culture, education, roles, and educational practices.

Each profile is as unique as each individual understanding of educational choices and practices.

### Profiles of Participants

It is relevant to include small biographies of each participant, as this research used a cabinet of curiosities to analyze the data, and these profiles allowed for inclusion of key pieces that did not fit into a specific category but were interesting or relevant. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each participant, including their histories and experiences, played a part in their pedagogical approaches and decisions. For these participants, the past was part of their present.

#### *Andrée*

Andrée, a Francophone, had a bachelor's degree in French literature and religion from Moncton University. She also had two unrelated college degrees that she received before going to school to become a teacher, as she was not sure what she wanted to do as a career. Later, she attended Teacher's College in Ontario.

When many teachers come to Alberta to teach, they must take some extra credits to receive their Alberta Teaching Certificate as there is discrepancy between other provincial education courses and Alberta Education expectations. And though Andrée was short 18 credits to receive her certification, she was planning on doing a master's degree to fulfill those credits and receive full certification in Alberta. Because she had a degree in French literature from



Moncton, she did not have to take any courses from the local Francophone university, which is where French immersion (FI) teachers in Alberta are expected to complete their education to work in an immersion setting. Due to her minor in religion, she was also not required to take the religion courses provided by Newman College at the University of Alberta to teach in a Catholic district. This allowed Andrée to have smoother entry into her career in Alberta.

After completing Teacher's College, she received a job right away with her current district. When she started her first job, it was in a kindergarten classroom. The following year, she moved schools and taught grade 1, followed by grade 5. She then taught grade 5 a second year, and the third year, the class was changed into a combined classroom for grades 5 and 6, because there were only 17 students in grade 5. After teaching the combined class, Andrée changed schools again, teaching junior high science for a year, then a combined grade 4/5 class, after which she was placed back in kindergarten. All her teaching experiences had been in FI schools.

### ***Jennifer***

Jennifer, an Anglophone, had a bachelor's degree in education from the local Francophone university. Though she did not hold a master's degree or any other formal teaching certification, Jennifer had made it a priority to participate in professional development regularly. She spent a large portion of her time working with the Alberta Assessment Consortium and participated in many of their conferences that occur in the summer. She had also worked with Alberta Education in the development and review of resources. One important piece that Jennifer believed was the key to her success in the kindergarten classroom was that she took the time to read and experiment with the literature given to her by the kindergarten consultants, "and not just mak[ing] it as a coffee table decoration" (May 14, 2020). However, with reading came more

research, modification, and time invested into what she was learning. She commented, “You can’t directly impose something into a French immersion classroom—What is this philosophy exactly, and how am I going to modify it so that it fits? And sometimes it doesn’t fit” (May 14, 2020). This meant that often, Jennifer had to get creative, which was evident in her teaching experiences.

Jennifer started her teaching career in a small town a few hours away from Edmonton, Alberta. There, she did two years with another Catholic school division. She taught grade 2, followed by a 1/2 combined classroom. She then had the opportunity to move to her current district, where she taught grade 4. She then moved schools again, where she taught another grade 1/2 combined class. Next, she taught grade 1 for approximately eight to ten years, then made the choice to move to kindergarten. After her long career in grade 1, Jennifer was selected to be a lead teacher and assist with the opening of a new school. A few years later, she was asked to fulfill the same position again, this time at another school that was being opened. Jennifer had been teaching for 20 years.

As a lead teacher, Jennifer explained that different principals approach the opening of a school in different ways. Due to her administration not having experience in French immersion, however, lots of the ordering of resources, organizing, or preparing grants had been her responsibility. In both schools, Jennifer never shook her “lead teacher” role. Not only did she participate in lots of professional development, she led sessions as well.

### *Chloé*

Chloé, an Anglophone, had a bachelor’s degree in economics and psychology and an after-education degree from the local university. Originally from Montreal, that was where Chloé had

learned her French and completed all her schooling. Due to all her French training and the fact that she came from a francophone background, receiving a job in FI had not been difficult.

Chloé's first job was in northern British Columbia, teaching kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs. After two years in BC, Chloé moved to Fort McMurray for one year, then moved to Edmonton. The majority of her background had been in grades 2 and 3; however, she had taught kindergarten for four years. For the last bit, Chloé had been teaching at an International Baccalaureate (IB) FI school, where the expectations differ slightly from other FI programs. In IB schools, there are specific program goals that must be integrated with the programs of study (Alberta Government, 2017; International Baccalaureate, 2018). Because of this, Chloé spent much of her time planning with those goals in mind, as well as finding various projects that were age appropriate for students' IB portfolios.

### ***Rachel***

Rachel, an Anglophone, had an education degree from the local Francophone university, and a master's degree in religious education from a local university as well.

Rachel started teaching grade 2, covering a maternity leave from September to March. She then subbed before receiving another position at another school for May and June, once again in grade 2. The following year, she subbed until November, when she then received a 1/2 combined classroom at her current school. She then taught grade 1 for five years, another 1/2 combined classroom, grade 2, and then grade 1.

Rachel was also the religious coordinator for her school, meaning she was also in charge of organizing all the celebrations and religious holidays, attending religious professional development, and working with teachers to find and apply new resources appropriate to the

Catholic education curriculum. This gave Rachel the opportunity to work with teachers throughout the school.

### ***Raquel***

Raquel, with one Francophone parent and another parent that is Anglophone, had been a student in the district where she was working at the time of the interview. She did her undergraduate degree in education at the local, Francophone university and had never considered going outside the city to seek employment as an immersion teacher. Because of this choice, she knew that she would be working for either of the two major boards that dominate her city. In total, she had spent 10 years inside the classroom. She had taught at two different schools, everything from kindergarten to grade 2. At the second school where she worked, she was approached by her principal to apply for a consultant position because there was a sudden vacancy. She received the position and started in mid-February. Since then, she had been the FI curriculum and planning consultant for grades 1–3 and had even had the opportunity to work in kindergarten classrooms.

In her position as a curriculum and planning consultant, Raquel offered support by planning with teachers, modelling teaching practices, supporting students individually and offering professional development in Division 1. Due to Raquel's position, she worked in a variety of classrooms with varying demographics. She had some key pieces that she believed bring success to the French-language learner.

### ***Stella***

Stella, a Francophone, had received her teaching training in Ontario and then taught grade 4 for five years in northern Ontario. After that, she decided to go to McGill University, where she worked as a research assistant, taught courses, and completed her master's degree in

education. She then returned to Ontario for half a year and made the choice to go teach abroad in Abu Dhabi. In her new school, she worked as a consultant for a few years at an all boys' academy, ranging from grades 1 to 5. Because teachers were using more rote strategies in the classroom, Stella would assist them with what she described as more “hands on, and teaching them to do hands-on learning, and take it on themselves” (May 19, 2020). In her role, she also did lots of work with teachers on assessment. After a few years, Stella moved back into the classroom, where she taught grades 1–3. She then received a position with another international school, where she worked for three years before moving back to Canada. She began to teach part time in French immersion again when she was sent an email that the district she currently worked for was looking for FI teachers. She applied, received the position, and had been with the district ever since.

### *Demi*

Demi's decision to pursue university was not something she had planned for her future. Rather, she began taking courses and discovered that with two more courses, she would have a degree in education. She did her undergraduate degree at Trent University, then moved to Ottawa, where she completed extra coursework to receive the credentials to work in French immersion, though already being Francophone. Next, she moved to her current city, where she received a position with the district she was currently working in. This year, she also began taking the leadership training to fulfill the requirements needed to be considered for administration.

In her career, Demi began with grade 1 and grade 5 at an IB arts school, then moved to her current school, where she taught grade 2 and then grade 1. Before teaching grade 1, however, Demi went to Abu Dhabi and taught a grade 2 English class. Though her teaching experience

had been more in Division 1, her experiences from working in another country had since inspired her to teach abroad again next year, only this time in Egypt.

### *Annette*

Annette, a Francophone, had received her BEd from the local Francophone university, graduating in 1986. Her major was early childhood. In 1992, she continued her journey in education with a master's degree from the University of Portland.

Annette had started her career in kindergarten and was offered a part-time FI classroom and part-time English classroom. Because the French classroom numbers grew, however, Annette was soon only teaching full-time FI kindergarten. Once Reggio Emilia began making its way into classrooms, Annette moved to grade 1, where she had remained for many years, before retiring last year. Though she had sampled other grades through subbing, Annette said that she thrived in and found kindergarten and grade 1 most rewarding.

### **Summary**

The profiles of teacher participants allow for a deeper understanding as to why their responses in the interviews differed. The participants had varying experiences in their education, varying personal philosophies regarding FI, and varying grade level experiences. With every experience comes a new lesson and a change in identity. These evolutions, or differences, point to the divergent directions and unique ideas expressed by each participating teacher. I pursue these unique directions in Chapter 6. Prior to that, in Chapter 5, I explore the commonalities expressed by the participants.

## **Chapter 5. Exploring the Common Ground: A Thematic Analysis**

The point of this research study is to conceptualize the understandings and experiences of teachers regarding multimodal, embodied literacy practices in a French immersion context. The analysis in this chapter looks for prominent themes, making the French immersion puzzle perhaps less complex and easier to understand. In this chapter and the next, I provide the responses and thoughts of the teachers who participated in the study. The present chapter includes aspects of the interviews that settled into specific themes from the questions related to each overarching research question: Multimodal and Embodied Conceptualizations, Multimodal and Embodied Classroom Experiences while Considering Use of Space and Materials, Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Challenges in the Context of FI, Possibilities of Student Success and Challenges within FI. Teachers' responses that varied to the point of demonstrating little convergence or agreement are taken up as a cabinet of curiosities in the following chapter.

### **Multimodal and Embodied Classroom Conceptualizations**

This theme stemmed from the original research question regarding how teachers are experiencing and thinking about multimodal and embodied teaching practices. The related interview questions to this research question were for teachers to share one experience where a student using their voice or body stood out, as well as sharing whether or not anything else was done to enhance this experience, or whether it remained organic.

Many of the teachers used the terminology "kinesthetic learning / kinesthetic opportunities" during the discussions of embodiment, and others used "environmental print" or "play-based learning" when talking about multimodality. Though one can see how each of these literacy concepts might fall into these categories, as the participants learned, multimodal and embodied literacy practices are much richer than kinesthetic or play-based language learning.

Kinesthetic learning is defined as “physically engaging classroom exercises. These might, for example, involve throwing a frisbee around the classroom to represent transfer of control in a procedure call/ The session begins with a brief kinesthetic learning activity to motivate the value of the activities” (Wolfman & Bates, 2005, p. 203). Play-based learning is described by Danniels and Pyle (2018) as “teacher-directed, such as intentionally playing games, while others are described as mutually directed, where teachers get involved without taking over or transforming the activity so that both teachers and students exercise some control over play” (subject). However, in both instances, the objects are seen as props, and not as inspiration or something that creates affect. Furthermore, both tend to be more teacher-led or inspired, instead of allowing students to create their own learning experiences through the process of becoming. Due to this, one could possibly argue that multimodal and embodied experiences provide richer, more adequate environments for students to learn due to its open nature. Once again, when considering the participants, the relationships between themes such as resourcing, language development, and organization of space and materials became evident. However, it is imperative to note that each teacher appeared to have a unique teaching style that answered to the needs of their specific classroom goals.

Andrée says that the most “interesting part is watching” her students do letters. She has them do the sign language for it, write it with their “magic pencil in the air” and do a physical action or dance for it. She then goes on to say, “even afterwards, weeks later, if you ask for the letter, they may sign it, write it in the air, or act and dance it. It’s always interesting to see how they are attaching that letter to the movement.” For Andrée, the body and voice are connected. You cannot do one without the other. She says in a language learning setting, they don’t always have the capacity to know what is said, but if they have the signs, it is something they can always use. As Andrée says, “one goes with the other, to separate it wouldn’t benefit the learners.” Andrée says because she tends to talk a lot with her hands, and so she finds a lot of her experiences are organic. Because Andrée does seem to be so connected with her body, I wanted to know what else her students were using their bodies for in her classroom. She says she allows



them to move. Wiggly stools, fidget toys are all there to help with focus. She says she has always been an advocate for “non-chair classrooms.” She believes “majority of our learners are not sitters.”

In terms of voice, she really encourages students to speak to each other and have small group conversations. She believes this encourages deeper thinking. “What is the difference between an M and a W? Students need to talk about that. I need to know how they are seeing it.” This discussion then brought up the idea of vocal intonation, and if she uses intonation to assist with vocabulary recognition. Andrée was honest in saying this was something she has never paid attention to.

Andrée believes that if students are not doing something while speaking the language, or embodying their language, then the children are on autopilot and not absorbing anything occurring around them. Embodied language learning is crucial in Andrée’s classroom.

Stella, teaching students in grade 1, believes in having children use their body and voice to practice their language. For Stella’s students, “there’s lots of like, miming and lots of like, movement and lots of like, pointing and images and things like that, in order to communicate without using English” (May 19, 2020). Stella has found the miming “really helps them to get it.” As I mentioned in the Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Challenges in the Context of FI section, one key piece for Stella was the use of the Jolly <sup>1</sup>Phonics program to assist with the embodiment process for students. Stella used this program from September to June. However, for her multimodal practices, Stella said she believes in a play-based learning approach to support the embodied practices during her lessons. She feels they need to touch things while

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<sup>1</sup> Jolly Phonics is a program used by a variety of teachers. This program is described as a “multi-sensory method” which encourages sound and letter recognition through specific actions, songs and sounds. The program also includes posters for each sound, as well as a CD-ROM which includes all the songs, sounds and movements to support teachers and students with this program (Jolly Phonics Reading, 2013, Introduction to Jolly Phonics).

learning the oral. “They need to touch and then do. When we do our animal unit and we get to touch and do, they love that.” She then went on to say that:

...magnetic letters at the beginning of the year, cubes with letters, stamps, pompoms with pincers, and rice, kind of introduce those things that trigger different things in the brain in terms of letter formation and letters knowledge—it’s not just pencil and paper. (May 19, 2020)

Annette was also quite open with how she transfers language to her students, she says the only time they like to speak French is if they are singing:

I sing a lot! Especially with the second language. . . . And the more students can become engaged in language, not just writing, but singing, speaking, expressing. . . . Drama. By body language, uh, you know, vocalizing, um. I think the more, the more creative they can be in expressing themselves, um, I think, uh, uh, the better they actually, um, um, own what they are trying to express. (May 21, 2020)

One word that was powerful during the interview with Annette was the word “own.”

This ownership is also why it is important for students to have a variety of multimodal, embodied experiences in the classroom. Jennifer began to answer the interview questions by saying, “oh my gosh, we use our bodies and voices all day long,” but then went on to say that students need “different environments, different places to practice. Um? And then each kid is going to pick up something different. . . . We didn’t all have the same first word. It might be something different that they’ve connected more with” (May 14, 2020). As she said, not every child wants the same experience. And when passion reveals itself, she said, she believes that this

is when students create something brilliant she has never seen, and these lines of flight are more visible. According to her, students need to be able to build, manipulate, and create in unprovoked settings.

One thing that Jennifer is trying to incorporate is to use more gestures, for new sentence structures or new language. “This helps them understand the abstract concept, like for the word « j’aime »...I don’t like to explain it in English. We also use « raconte-moi les sons » as a school, which is animated literacy./ They may not remember the words, but they know [gesture]...That has made a difference in students using their French, because with an action, they are much less likely to use their English.” She finds with the « raconte-moi les sons » program, “kids just remember stuff a lot better. Because there is a gesture, you will find kids do it [gesture] and then remember the sound.” Jennifer believes that kids need a “cueing method” to connect it one more way to the brain. Jennifer’s school uses this program from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The hope is that by using the same program, the struggling students will “always hear and see the same thing.” According to Jennifer, teachers in upper grades do notice a difference.

For voice, Jennifer brought up an interesting idea within the conversation. She informed me that she is trying to be more careful of the amount of time she speaks. She is trying to give them more opportunities. During attendance for example, she tries to give them a topic or sentence starter to share their ideas. She says it gives each child at least 1 chance a day to speak directly to her. This has led to students being able to “play around” with vocabulary to experiment, and further their French speaking from building on words. “They figured out they could put « j’aime » and « manger » together, and then say « Mme Jennifer » which they think is quite funny.” This translates to, “I like eating Mme Jennifer.” She said they are just starting to figure out you can be funny in French, just like in English. She then went on to say, “it’s not just

about listening to them talk, it's also about making time in my day to hear them talk. I think anytime they try to make a sentence, is a key moment. My experience. Because they don't really talk a whole lot in French at this point, unless you place those moments in."

Jennifer is intentional about not just showing a sound and being done with it. Everything has to be revisited and given opportunities to be practiced throughout the day. And "when you hear them use what has been taught, you need to make a big deal about it."

Chloe believes, just like Jennifer, that students need to be "exposed to different things—with different materials" (May 14, 2020). Chloe is also a supporter of Jolly Phonics, and she said she notices that when she works with small groups of students, "a lot would look at the board with the letters and do the action that went with it, so I think a lot of students are kinesthetic learners and that really helps them to learn" (May 14, 2020).

Demi and Rachel were also advocates of Jolly Phonics. Rachel said she uses the posters and the songs from the program but takes it one step further with "body spelling":

Yeah, so the, the sounds that we teach them, every sound has a movement, right?

Like for A, E, so it does engage them, and then when they are reading, and they don't know the sound, and you show them the action, they know it. So there is a huge link. Yeah, so body spelling. . . . So when we spell words, sometimes I'll get them to stand up, spell it out with our bodies. (May 19, 2020)

Once again, these teachers all had the same goal, which was to encourage orality of French within their classrooms. Some teachers were taking a play-based approach, supporting the osmosis philosophy of students absorbing the "Frenchness" around them. Other teachers, such as Demi, took a more aggressive approach using Jolly Phonics and the AIM program. Demi stated in the interview that

in my class this year they echoed everything, everything. So, when I, when we would be getting ready for an example, when we would be getting ready for recess, they would stand up. We would say, « en premier, je mets mon manteau. Après ça, je mets mon chapeau. » And they would repeat everything, everything, everything, everything. (May 21, 2020)

The students in Demi's room not only echoed everything, but also had actions or physical examples of everything. "For the Christmas concert this year, rather than simply standing to sing a song, I taught my students a body percussion piece to go along with the lyrics and music. I found that the rhythm and beat enabled my students to learn the second language lyrics quicker than when only the lyrics were presented."

As the interviewer, I was curious to know if students copied her actions that she worked so hard to present each day, or if it was a struggle to get them to do the actions. Demi said that when students were unsure, they copied. However, once the confidence came with certain letters or vocabulary words, the actions slowly disappeared on the students' side, even though she continued to use them.

Through the discussions of this theme with the teachers, it became evident that all were using voice and body to encourage their students' language experiences. Though this particular theme was related to other themes, it related differently for each participant. Therefore, the use of a cabinet of curiosities continues to be important within this research.

### **Multimodal and Embodied Classroom Experiences While Considering the Use of Space and Materials**

This theme derived from the research question of how teachers perceive multimodal and embodied literacy practices as assisting with French immersion teaching. The interview

questions that came from the research questions were how students are using their bodies to engage in learning, how students use their voice to engage with learning, followed with how the teacher feels this assists them with learning the French language. Following these questions, teachers were asked about whether or not they feel that materials are used differently in FI versus English classrooms, how the different spaces in the classroom are organized, and teacher thoughts on how students use the various spaces or materials within the classroom. There is one response from this section that have been placed in the Cabinet of Curiosities chapter.

Raquel believes that teachers should be using materials such as visuals and song to accompany new vocabulary or sound as a support to assist students in using their bodies to learn French. Raquel also believes that these types of practices assist students in engaging in their French learning, and specifically mentions the program « raconte-moi les sons » as an example of a program that has excellent materials for students and teachers. Raquel affirms that

if done well, explicitly, and deliberately with the appropriate scaffolding- I absolutely believe that it supports language acquisition and learning. The visual becomes a tool/reference point for students. If they require additional support- they refer to it.

Furthermore, Raquel asserts that materials are absolutely used differently in an FI classroom than that of an English streamed environment.

In a second language classroom there is more attention and time spent on developing vocabulary; without vocabulary students can't read, speak or write in the target language.

While the following are simply good pedagogical practices that aren't specific to language learning, they are extremely important /to help and support language learning.

Raquel goes on to say however, that some of the difficulties which are obvious with incorporating materials into student learning is that many resources or materials are in English,

so many teachers feel that either needed materials are not available or must be translated.

“Immersion in a minority setting is challenging as it limits students’ exposure to the target language.”

Similar to « Raconte-moi les sons » is, as previously mentioned, AIMS. Demi is consistently using this program in her classroom to engage students’ bodies in the language-learning process. Demi always does the actions for the AIMS program first, and then the students repeat. To engage the students in using their voices, Demi also has them echo everything that she says, as she does the actions. This way, the body movement and the actions are together as one unit, which seems to be something that all the teachers “do” at the same time. Because in immersion setting students also come with a smaller base of vocabulary words, Demi pays special attention to the types of charts or visuals that she uses, ensuring that the level of vocabulary is basic or simple enough for students to utilize efficiently. Demi believes that her classroom should be organized in a way that promotes whatever activity she is working on. This means that for language work with games, there are nooks made available in the corners of rooms or on carpets. For together activities, she may push desks together, or use bigger tables. The students, however, do need practice and training to know *how* to use these spaces properly, and what the expectations are.

Jennifer has visuals as her biggest materials. She says she uses visuals for everything. Levels of achievement, sounds, classroom expectations, materials for different tasks, as well as visuals for what completed tasks should look like. These are considered to be more materials and not resources because they are *things* that students use, not just the teacher. For voice and body, Jennifer also says that they play lots of “games.” The students do lots of “letter hunts” around the room where students pretend, they are detectives and then have to say the sound and put the

action with it. The visuals are also used to reinforce vocabulary. However, as Jennifer says, visuals must be used intentionally. As she says, “you have to draw attention to them, it has to be intentional. You have to go back. We play games with the visuals, it has to be there for a purpose. It has to be very intentional. And you have to pick and choose what is the most important.”

Jennifer says that often, students will come up how to use the space or materials in unique ways, that she never anticipated. Jennifer said that she put very few things in the playhouse. Because of this, the students started to use the “babies” as meat, because there were not the materials out for students to have a “real meal.” She has also created spaces that are more “open-ended” where students can come up with their own games, or use materials to expand their imagination. Some kids will ask to bring materials from one place to another to “blend” centers.” She says however, if expectations are set up at the beginning, students will use the “right kind of creative, but it is important to lay out the intentions for that area.” Every space should have a specific purpose, to “initiate a certain type of language.” For example, right now, students are working on the song, « je suis une pizza » by Charlotte Diamond, so the house has now become a “pizza making center” for students to physically experience the vocabulary through the use of materials. Jennifer says it is “really giving them the chance to imitate what they saw.”

When asked if she feels that she uses materials differently in an immersion setting than in an English setting, her response was interesting.

Yes and no. If I had never been a language teacher, than probably. But as a language teacher, I would probably carry lots of stuff over, because there are ELL that could benefit. I don't think a lot of people who only speak one language or only interact with



one language realize how a lot of these little things we do for second language learners could actually impact their first language.

For visual materials, Andrée uses a picture and a word and has created a word wall. For example, on a Monday, she would put up a letter with some words that start with that letter, and she comes back to it to compare and contrast. She says it is important to know where things are on the word wall, and where to find specific words or sounds. She says she also uses lots of visual materials when giving instructions. For example, for assignments, she will have a visual for writing your name, and have a picture of a pencil to indicate to students what materials they will need to use to complete the task. For coloring, she uses pictures of pencil crayons, and starts this process in September. This indicates to students what to do, even if not every word of the instructions are understood. Andrée also believes in the use of visuals and says that it works.

Regarding space and using spaces differently than perhaps intended, Andrée did say now with COVID it is difficult to use the classroom. However, she has split the classroom up into “four houses,” and each house is in a different area of the classroom. The students were placed in their “houses” in September, and are not allowed to leave the area (due to COVID, and transmission of germs). She says they have been using the house and home vocabulary more than in other years, because of how the spaces have to be organized.

To engage students with sound and voice, she has lots of songs to allow the students to move and sing and experience the language in a repetitive form. Andrée said that the students love it and ask to play the songs. She then puts these songs on the iPad, to allow them to experience it on their own. She says it’s about encouraging students to

not be afraid to express their interests. Even with vocabulary words, she allows students to select their own words to place on their word wall. She said it's about using their thoughts and ideas to engage them and using the materials and spaces accordingly.

Andrée did say that she was not sure if she would use materials differently in an English classroom than her French classroom, because she has never taught English before. But she says she probably would, because you are helping kids make connections to their primary language, and it's about connecting knowledge through words.

Stella says that because of COVID, it is really difficult to get the student to pair up, and practice using their voice in social contexts. Normally, they would have grade 4 buddies that they would work with, or even other members of the classroom. However, as Stella said again, she does lots of mimicking, and lots of repetition and rote. Because Stella also uses Jolly Phonics, she has many of the visuals and actions that are incorporated with sounds, words or even small songs and stories. She says that though her grade partner does lots of big posters for visuals, and though they are pretty, she said, "who actually looks at them? They aren't actually using them." Because of this, she likes to create them with the students. Some of the visuals that are really used is her Jolly Phonics alphabet wall. "They will look for the image, which helps them to remember the action and the letter. That is their thought process, definitely."

Stella has separated her room into different subjects to assist students in knowing where to go for language or subject responses. For example, maps are on the back wall, there are specific places for books and sharing, and an area for letters and sounds. "I found that just understanding, and listening in French and processing that, and then copying on their own, it was like 0 pretty much. But if you have them together, and

working on it as a team, and things in a specific place, it's like a machine.” Stella says they also enjoy using vocabulary cards, but because students cannot share, vocabulary is not as high this year as in other years. “The depth and breadth for the use of the language is lower because all the touching, because of COVID is gone.” However, COVID has also forced students to become more creative with limited materials. Because students are now assigned a certain number of Math cubes or shapes, Stella has seen how many cool creations have come from students making *stuff* out of not much. This of course, opens up other opportunities to discuss colors shapes or numbers in French.

In terms of using materials differently in FI than in English, Stella says that “the approach to literacy is the same. Letter, word, sound recognition. High frequency words, accessing vocabulary, spelling out words, spelling independently...” She says that the purpose of a word wall is a reading, not writing tool no matter what the language. She would still use the same approach and tools, just in a different language. When asked if she would still use her voice and body the same way, she says she probably would, because in Grade 1, there are always many English Language Learners.

This part of the study revealed a few different things: Many teachers believe that voice, body and materials are important no matter what language you are working in. Students will creatively use the classroom and whatever *things* are around them if given permission to do so. Teachers are integrating these multimodal opportunities with body and voice to try and get as much out of the language experiences as possible for the sake of their students. This makes one wonder what teachers have witnessed as student success, from these various, implemented concepts.

### **Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Challenges in the Context of French immersion**

This theme originated from the research question regarding what teachers perceive as the challenges associated with utilizing multimodal and embodied teaching practices in early years French immersion. This assisted in the creation of the interview questions of what teachers find difficult about incorporating materials into student learning and why, as well as teachers sharing a time when asking their students to use their voices or bodies in French did not really work. It should be noted that one of the questions that fell under this category has been placed in the Cabinet of Curiosities chapter.

When asked what Stella found difficult about integrating materials into student learning, her response was quite straightforward.

...not forgetting about it, right, you're just so rushed with time, and you want to introduce that vocabulary, or any from any subject, right, you need to repeat it, repeat, but then you have all this other stuff you need to teach on top of it, so you forget. Right now, it's making 22 of everything. It is also re-envisioning, what a task is almost, like I know how I used to do it, but it's how to get that process working again with limited materials. With all the obstacles. / I am also the most important tool for students...Looking at pencil grip, 22 times in 22 different ways depending on where they are at. This is what it should look like. I need to be there for all of it.

In terms of using voice and body and its difficulties, Stella said the “students are pretty good.” Because of the visuals and practice, students know what should come first, and how to use their bodies, voices or even materials appropriately. However, she says that having students listening to the songs and doing the gestures will not be done independently, unless she

does it with them. She says the more musical the students are, the more likely they are to “buy-in” to that type of process. She says compared to other things, or activities, it “just isn’t the smoothest.”

For Jennifer, she feels like sometimes she doesn’t have enough of what she needs, or the materials are not available. Especially with COVID, Jennifer needs multiple sets of everything. She said, “When dividing up the Lego, it’s like, you give out eight blocks, and another eight blocks, but what can you really build with eight blocks? So, it is about the amount of materials. And training them with the materials. And because I teach in an area where financially, they get whatever they want, toys are more expendable to them.” For Jennifer, students need to realize that other groups need to be able to use them later on. She said also trying to be open-ended with their level of attendance and attention span...It can be difficult.

Sometimes you think something will be so engaging, and they don’t give two hoots about it. Or you will have a morning and an afternoon class, and one class loves it and does amazing with it, or the other class doesn’t care and gets silly with it...Interests between the two groups as well. One groups can love dramatic play, and another doesn’t. And you only have so much space in the room.

Jennifer would love to allow students to explore to the maximum, but sometimes it just doesn’t happen.

When asked about a time when asking her students to use voice or body didn’t really work, she replied with, “oh, I’m sure there have been LOTS of those times!” She has had lessons where she thought students would make connections, and they didn’t. Or she needed more visuals or gestures than she thought. She has also had kids get caught up “on the wrong thing.” She said it is almost as if they get derailed, and that can get difficult because you want to explain

it in English, but you can't. For her, she said there are frequently moments, even between AM and PM classes where one gets it, and the other is crickets. One of her groups was interested in animals, and they wanted a vet clinic. For her morning class, they knew exactly what was needed, and for her afternoon class, they couldn't get past needing animals and just animals for the clinic. She says the issues can even come from her not using body and voice correctly, and students miscommunicate instructions, or she forgot to have students repeat the instructions back, so the instructions are forgotten.

Andrée says that students do not know how to use basic materials, like dominos. She said that she realized that she took a lot of "pre-teaching" for granted." Using scissors, and how to use basic materials correctly. Or some kids that come in and do not know how to write their name. She said she even has students come in that do not know how to hold a pencil or use crayons or markers. She said it is really getting them to use the materials, and how to use them correctly. She goes on to say that:

having them for only half a day too- and with COVID, half of it is spent getting the students to wash their hands. It makes you question whether or not I have time for teaching how to use scissors, because I still need to get the language in. There is all that juggling that comes into play.

Andrée didn't know if she was more lenient with her students, but she could not think of a time student really failed with voice or body. She said the "R" in French is difficult, as they can't "hear the sound, and they cannot make it." But she said lots of muscles need to be worked that are not used in English.

Raquel believes that French materials and availability make things difficult for students, as it limits exposure opportunities in the classroom. Because English resources are more sought

after, it is easier to find, and use available resources that are more appropriate for the students' levels.

When asked about students not using their voices or bodies in a way that worked, Raquel's response summed up what many teachers in this study felt:

I think when it is not done explicitly, when students aren't shown (modeled) how, when it is only done once or twice or if there is no follow through.

I also think depending on the task, if students are passive and the learning is not student-centered teacher will see growth and learning from their students.

Demi reasserted what Raquel said, as she said that sometimes, student interest and the level of vocabulary does not match the resources available.

In order for students to comprehend the materials at their knowledge level in the second language, sometimes their interest level in the subject matter is not there.

Higher interest with lower vocabulary is usually hard to find.

Regarding what Demi's beliefs were with body and voice, she said that part of the issues is there are always students that do not like to move, or do not like to speak. To get these students to buy in can be quite difficult.

Though teachers appeared to have varying issues with students using body and voice correctly, it still brings forward the idea that teachers are relying heavily on voice and body to promote language learning. Though teachers may go about this differently, the intention is there, with the same goal; students need to improve their oral French in immersion settings.

### **Possibilities of Student Success**

The theme for Possibilities of Student Success arose from the research question about how teachers characterize their students' responses to multimodal and embodied teaching

practices. The interview questions for teachers were to share an experience about a student who has thrived when using the body or voice during French learning, about a student that struggled when using body or voice during French learning, and whether or not the teacher was able to make adjustments to assist the child in participating and understanding more of what was occurring in the classroom.

Andrée finds that students that are most engaged with body and voice are students that have academic challenges. “Some students can’t just get the sound, right, they need something more than just you making a sound and write it on the board. They need to move, see it, feel it. And I find those kids get more out of it, then, your neurotypical kids.” Even if some students are not coded (coded means that students have come to the classroom with some type of diagnosis, such as autism or any other disability that may impact learning), there will be some that if you ask what a sound is, they won’t know.” If you put a movement to it, she feels it is easier for them to recall it. Or using sensory bins to feel it. She believes it “helps weaker students.”

For students that “don’t get it, it is an attendance thing.” Andrée was quick to respond saying that students need to be present in order to put the pieces to the blocks together, and have the confidence to move, use voice, and the materials in the room. She says for these students, you have to sit beside them during other times in the day, to work with them individually. This coming in beside them in a well-known technique, known as “sliding in beside.” Raquel supports the use of this as well, as she says that for students not getting it, this offers “additional guided practice.” Raquel also refers to the idea that some students need more buy-in, for example, using different materials than what is available for the other students.

For Demi, she finds that it is mostly the girls that really enjoy the body/voice experience. She said it is typically boys that don’t want to use body and voice and refuse to participate.



Jennifer has a student this year that is selectively mute, so she has really done well with body, knowing the connection to the words. She also has a student with quite high anxiety, so using body with voice, to have more than one opportunity to participate, takes away the stress of simply using voice.

However, she went to say that even though body works well for her student, because she is selectively mute, she won't use her voice with body. However, she thinks that the only time it doesn't work is if she isn't intentional, or she doesn't explain instructions well enough. She says that body and voice depends on the teacher, and can become the adult's fault if it doesn't work.

Stella said the great thing about body and voice is that there are two outlets for students to communicate with. With the letters, all she has to make is the action, and the students know the sound and will vocalize it. She said to give instructions with just voice, doesn't have the same power for students than if she were to give the instructions, and use actions as well.

She went on to say however, that she is always differentiating. For some students, she has to emphasize key words, give examples, mime it, or repeat instructions multiple times. As she says, "you assume it would work for all," but she has learned that it action and body could have more of an impact for some, than for others.

Though multimodality and embodied literacy practices seem to fit perfectly in the context of FI, teachers still have some issues that are regularly addressed. However, it should also be noted that during the interview, teachers were able to think more quickly of positive, than negative experiences with students using body and voice.

## **Summary**

Through the various responses of the eight teacher participants, specific themes became apparent within this study: French ability (challenges); resources; multimodal and embodied

classroom experiences; organization of space and materials (preferred student activities); and organic and inorganic happenings. Participants seemed to have similar experiences with students and their French language abilities. One important piece of evidence that came to light during the interviews, is that participants share the belief that in order for things to happen, there must be planning, although there are also moments that teachers must recognize as natural occurrences that can lead to something more. These types of responses are a demonstration of the various ways which educators think, view everyday classroom life, and, most importantly, view the importance of French acquisition in the classroom. The following chapter looks to explore the varying views of teachers through a cabinet of curiosities.

## Chapter 6. A Cabinet of Curiosities: Exploring the “Remaining” Data

### Introduction

A cabinet of curiosities provides a place for outliers in the data that do not necessarily fit within a thematic analysis. I feel that there is one important piece to this study that may lead to further questioning, understanding, or knowledge that only the outlying data provides. The extra data that a cabinet of curiosities can provide is a window into the personal ideologies of participants within a study. These ideologies can greatly affect the other responses or themes. Therefore, my cabinet of curiosities is curated to allow for this crucial data to be present. As Pearce and MacLure (2009) believe, “cabinets of curiosities can reinscribe the exotic, the alienated, and the socially deviant or compliant” (Abstract). Without these exotic, alienated pieces to which Pearce and MacLure refer, data is simply repeating the same message, or simply settling into a theme. In this chapter, I explore the various ideas the participants gave that add to this study but may not fit neatly into this research puzzle. These ideas were decided upon by asking, “what assists in telling the story of multimodal, embodied literacy that adds to the “big picture,” and is unlike anything else I have heard from other participants?” It is important to accept this type of data, because it demonstrates a consideration of information that does not fit a specific form, theme, or anticipated response. It may also lead to research ideas in the future. Due to this data not “fitting in,” I have organized this section by the research question’s main idea to demonstrate the varying responses that teachers gave during the interviews.

It should be mentioned that after much consideration, I felt that it was a “given” that teachers would view multimodality and embodiment practices differently; after all, teachers use different resources, unique planning methods and have varying degrees of experience. Furthermore, schools in the district have different expectations based on their demographics or

availability of materials. One theme that was especially unique, and had responses that both baffled and took me by surprise, however, were Challenges within FI. The reason that this felt so relevant was because to interview as many teachers as I have, and not have one teacher really agree with another on what the issue or challenges within Early Years Fi are, presents more questions, concerns and ideas for future research. It also makes me wonder how these issues influence their multimodal, embodied teaching practices in Early Years settings.

### **French Challenges within the FI program**

When I asked about the challenges within FI, Andrée relayed immediately that the issue lay with the parents trying to push their children too quickly and not accepting the academic levels kindergarten requires. Many parents, during May, would ask Andrée why their child could not read in kindergarten, yet their child in grade 2 read with ease. Andrée had to continuously remind parents that an age gap between children is huge when considering literacy abilities (May 13, 2020). When I looked at the demographics of Andrée's school and the challenges that presented themselves, it was difficult to ignore the relationship between demographics and academic expectations. When I pressed further for issues on the student side of FI, Andrée observed that students were reluctant to learn the language. One discussion piece that came about when speaking with one of my committee members, was that students should not be expected to be fluent after Kindergarten, or even Grade 1. After all, we don't expect children to be fluent the first or second year of birth, so why does this pressure come with a child learning a second, third or in some cases, a fourth language? Andrée was one of the first interviews that I participated in, and I expected other teachers to have similar complaints: Students are not speaking French, lots of pressure from parents, students won't participate... However, the answers continued to differ,

forcing me to question what the “true” problem with French immersion, and its success is, and, is embodiment and multimodal activities enough to assist the teachers and students in oral success?

Annette was quick to share her largest challenge in FI, which was students’ inability to focus in the afternoon. This was because, “especially with the younger grades, uh, uh, in the beginning of the year—the days were long with learning a second language” (May 21, 2020). Annette went on to add another issue within FI, namely, the progression in, in a second language program is inconsistent with the English language because the students will not be writing as quickly as they will in English program, or reading as quickly, they won’t be at the same level. “There’s a period where there is a lot of listening, you know, and singing and just absorbing the language, uh, before there is any sort of production” (Annette). Annette brings up an interesting point with the length of school days. I can’t imagine as a child sitting in a classroom, trying to focus on everything a teacher was saying, and not being able to understand most of it. This, however, is where I felt that multimodal and embodied practices are so relevant; students may be having to listen, but there are still ways to actively participate through movement, mimic and use of materials. In all my years of teaching, however, and in all the “issues” of FI in Early Years that I have discussed with other colleagues both within interviews for this research or otherwise, I have never heard of a teacher bring up students’ exhaustion in Early Years, and attention span in the afternoon as an issue. However, is this truly a FI issue, or an educational issue that teachers in other programs feel as well?

Jennifer believed that the lack of oral production which Annette spoke about earlier, is due to there “not being enough time to practice [French].” Time in the day can be taken away from snack, and having to be a language model for the students, forcing Jennifer to ask, “How much time have they really had” (May 14, 2020)? She then went on to share her personal belief

that if students have not had the appropriate amount of time to “process” the French language, they will not take risks and use it (May 14, 2020). Though Jennifer is a well-respected teacher within the district and has an array of experience, it made me wonder what other teachers were doing to assist student with “processing” the language. To be honest, I had never thought of students needing to “process” it; I always believed that practice, and a variety of experiences and exposure was enough to ensure student engagement and success. This made me question what “processing” looks like at this age, in this type of program. What really qualifies as success? Is it a child simply being engaged and trying, or is it a child able to use and transfer skills that are expected of a child above grade level?

Raquel, a district consultant, alluded to the idea that “teachers have a superficial understanding or surface level as a general, and then sometimes, there is not enough planning maybe is the word. . . . But that is the biggest area of growth” (May 18, 2020). She also went on to say that teachers “not using the target language of instruction” or doing activities “linked to the actual outcomes from the Programs of Study” are also an issue. Unfortunately, elementary teachers are considered generalists. This means, that teachers trained to teach from Kindergarten to Grade 6 have a surface level understanding of all subject areas, and probably will not gain a deeper level of understanding until having to teach a specific grade level. Even after teaching a grade level, it can take a number of years to be an “expert.” Furthermore, training is not given at the local Francophone University regarding how to read the various components of the Programs of Study, or, how to weave them together. This isn’t taught within the district either. Or, if it is discussed, the Professional Development tends to be optional. New teachers are “thrown in” to a classroom, and expected to perform as a seasoned teacher would. This really made me wonder if

this was the key to some of the other challenges faced by teachers, or if it is just one more piece to a perhaps, unsolvable puzzle.

Chloe took quite a different direction, revealing her biggest issue teaching kindergarten, which was the child's willingness to learn French. She said that some of the children felt that "their parents stuck them there" and that they weren't there "because they sort of wanted to be there" (May 14, 2020). To Chloe, this "wanting to be there" was a piece that would impact a child's willingness to participate. What, as educators, can we do to make students take ownership, and "buy into" the process of language learning, and, was embodied literacy and multimodality enough? As previously discussed, many of the games, or resources or tools would still be the same in an English streamed classroom. What about FI classrooms was it, that made some students unwilling, and not wanting to be there? Is it higher expectations? Lack of teacher knowledge and the ability to make class "fun?" or, was it simply because, students felt "stuck?"

As a researcher, seeing the issues that participants presented made me question how to even begin resolving the issue of how to make Early Years, FI more beneficial for students. Though I feel that multimodal and embodiment practices are a key piece to students being confident with their orality, there is obviously something else missing that could potentially make the program even better. Perhaps the resolution is in solving the various, unique responses given to the challenges in FI. But that would require a completely different study.

## **Summary**

Though there were widely varying responses to a few of the interview questions, the most profound responses came from teachers' beliefs on what the true difficulties are within French immersion. Difficulties ranged from the parents and their high expectations, to students and their lack of motivation, to lack of resources, and even to student frustration from not feeling as

though FI was “their choice.” Because every participant gave such an individual response, it is possible to do a research study simply on this one question. Though I wanted to ask more about this specific topic, it would change the scope of the research, and perhaps upset the main purpose of this study. For that reason, I have suggested at the end of this research that this become another research topic, for another time. However, it is still important to remember that FI issues, as well as understandings of multimodality and embodied literacy, influence the teaching style, curriculum development, and resources that teachers select to impact language learning. The following chapter looks to unpack and analyze, synthesize, and interpret the data.



## Chapter 7. Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis

### Introduction

In this chapter, I bring together the histories of the participants, the thematic analysis, the cabinet of curiosities, and the research literature to discuss and explore my research questions through a posthumanist, practitioner approach. Posthumanism, as described by Bayne (2018), “involves us in making an ontological shift from understanding ‘the human’ as an individuated entity separate from and observant of the world and its (human and non-human) inhabitants, to one which is inextricably connected to the world and only conceivable as emergent with and through it” (p.1). From this definition, I also give examples of posthumanism in practice, from the interviews given by the participants.

From the thematic analysis and the histories of the participants, it is evident that certain themes or concepts are more dominant with some participants than others, depending on their experiences. This dominance influences the types of activities selected by teachers, as well as the lines of flight within the classrooms of the various participants. Through a return to the literature review, I further analyze my findings and themes in relation to previous research. The data that did not fit into the thematic analysis are included in the cabinet of curiosities. This cabinet of curiosities is what allows important components from my research that do not fit into the thematic analysis to still have a place within this research, and perhaps be evidence to build on in another research study. It is important to include all the evidence, as the participants have strong ties to their experiences and what has formulated their professional identities. Each participant, like each item in a cabinet of curiosities, is unique.

## **Returning to the Review of the Literature**

In the research study, it is evident that the teacher participants are trying to find as many ways as possible to encourage French language use in the classroom. As mentioned in the statement of the problem within the first chapter, Early Years children in Kindergarten and Grade 1 must learn age appropriate skills, but must also acquire a new language. Though pedagogical approaches such as Reggio Emilia, Jolly Phonics, AIM and *Daily 5* are in use, some students are still not able to grasp the oral language expected of French immersion programs.

The literature review begins by discussing how FI programs are content based, meaning students are learning the academic language required for each subject area, and families are not required to have any prior knowledge of the French language. Exposure to the language, and how to go about it, has been a large discussion point in immersion for quite a while now (Genesee and Shapson, 1984). Researchers such as Ohta (2001) believe that language is learned through an environment that allows interaction, which encourages the language to stick. Toohey, Smythe, Dagenais and Forte (2020) view language acquisition as a posthumanist approach, believing that the intra-actions that occur between materials, or things, greatly outweigh the activities of memorization and rote learning that so many utilize in classrooms.

Cammarata and Tedick (2012) continue to question which practices are best to target all students, however, one point that is agreed upon amongst some researchers, is that too much time is being spent on the subject, instead of the language of instruction. Other tools, such as AIM or Jolly Phonics have tried their best to respond to this issue; the main goal of both these programs is to get students moving, and assign actions and vocal intonations with various words or sounds. In theory, Bearne (2009) believes in the success of these types of programs is largely due to the evolution of multimodal and embodied practices, largely due to the work of Kress.

The teachers in this study addressed how they are addressing the issue of targeting more of the oral language within their individual rooms, giving specific examples to all they are doing to reach the full range of student in their classrooms. Teachers are using Reggio Emilia-inspired centres. This means that the centers are nonconventional, and objects tend to be more natural in nature (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). There is also an abundance of music, sounds, stories, and drama to capture students' interest and keep students on task. Furthermore, teachers spoke of the many opportunities they create to allow students time to practice the language and not just hear it in specific subject areas. This is where one is able to witness the pedagogical shift that Reggio Emilia requires, that was discussed in the Review of the Literature chapter (Shelley & Flessner, 2013).

There is not a lot of literature on how to use multimodality and embodiment practices in early years in French immersion. This recognizing of what is “missing” to teachers is evident through their strategies, such as using ASL, becoming familiar with programs such as AIM or Daily 5, and even trying to use the materials around them to serve new purposes, such as the “cozy cupboard” or the various ways that teachers use their lofts. It became apparent that teachers knew what some of this research was saying and were trying to act accordingly. But, as many of the teachers realized, there is always more we can be doing, especially in language programs.

### **Themes from the Interviews Related to Research Questions**

During the interviews, I thought about how each interview question needed to connect to my research questions. These questions also opened opportunities to find “themes” within each area, influenced by the literature found for this research. However, the responses within these themes varied, making some questions and responses shift into my cabinet of curiosities and

away from commonly expressed themes. Examples of this shift out of themes and into my cabinet of curiosities is seen in Challenges in FI, and I note these in Table 7.1 through the use of italics.

**Table 7.1. Relevant Questions for Each Research Question**

Research Question	Related interview Questions	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are teachers experiencing and thinking about multimodal and embodied teaching practices?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about one experience you have had with your students using their bodies/voices that really stands out to you?</li> <li>• Did you do anything to enhance this experience, or was it organic?</li> </ul>	Multimodal and Embodied Conceptualizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do teachers perceive multimodal and embodied literacy practices as assisting with French Immersion teaching?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your understanding of language and embodiment?</li> <li>• What is your understanding of multimodality?</li> <li>• How are you having students use their bodies to engage in learning?</li> <li>• How are you having students use their voices to engage in learning?</li> </ul> <p><b>Follow-up: How do you think this helps them learn French?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think you use materials differently than you would if you were teaching in an English classroom? Tell me about that...</li> <li>• How are the different spaces in your room used or organized?</li> </ul>	Multimodal and Embodied Classroom Experiences while Considering Use of Space and Materials

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your thoughts on how students use the various spaces or materials in the classroom?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do teachers perceive as the challenges associated with utilizing multimodal and embodied teaching practices in early years French Immersion?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you find difficult about incorporating materials into student learning? Why do you think it is a challenge?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time that you felt that asking your students to use their bodies/voices in their French learning really didn't work. What happened?</li> </ul>	Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Challenges in the Context of FI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do teachers characterize their students' responses to multimodal and embodied teaching practices?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about one student who has thrived when using body/voice during French learning.</li> <li>• Tell me about one student who has struggled when using body/voice during French learning.</li> <li>• Were you able to adjust expectations to make this child more successful? What did you do?</li> </ul>	Possibilities of Student Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there some aspects of multimodal and embodied teaching practice that work particularly well to enhance early years French Immersion instruction?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What do you see as one or two issues associated with French immersion as typically taught in Early Years?</i></li> <li>• Does having the children use their voices and bodies in active ways</li> </ul>	Challenges within FI

	help you address [issue previously stated by teacher] How?	
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### The Relationship Between the Found Themes and the Review of the Literature

During research, it is imperative to be able to make connections between the various findings from data collection to the information given within the Review of the Literature, through a posthumanist, practitioner lens. To assist with this process, and to know what ties to make from the data found to the themes being analyzed amongst the various participants, the table below demonstrates how the various themes formulated from the data collected relates back to the information shared within the Chapter 2 Review of the Literature. Though not all research is portrayed in this table, the important pieces from key scholars is included in the table below.

**Table 7.2. Review of the Literature and Themes from the Data Analysis**

Key Concepts from the Review of the Literature	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “language is not a unique product of just the learner’s individual brain, but of a mind that actively draws on the interactive environment of the setting in which language is used” (Ohta, 2001, p. 4).</li> <li>-Kress: “pioneered and continues to play a decisive role in shaping the field of multimodality” (Kress, 2009, p. x).</li> <li>-Jewitt (2008): What constitutes as literary success in today’s communicative world?</li> <li>-Multimodality is evolving (Bearne, 2009)</li> <li>-students and children have always used their bodies to engage in language acquisition (Siegel, 2006)</li> <li>- day-to-day life “employ a broad understanding of social semiotics that includes body, space, gesture, senses and objects” (Hua, Otsuju &amp; Pennycook, 2017, p. 383)</li> </ul>	Multimodal and Embodied Conceptualizations

<p>-“being and knowing, affective and material intra-actions exceed languages and literacies repertoires in pedagogical settings” Toohey, Smythe, Dagenais &amp; Forte, 2020, p.23).</p> <p>- one must acknowledge the message and the range of multimodal communication offered by the individual (Jewitt, 2008).</p> <p>- Posthumanism: “might reconfigure classroom practice and curriculum” (Snaza &amp; Weaver, 2014, p. 9).</p> <p>- Deleuze: lines of flight and rhizomes as referred to by Kuby and Rucker (2015).</p> <p>-intra-action: Individuals” do not <i>not</i> exist, but are not individually determinate. Rather, “individuals” only exist within phenomena (particular materialized/materializing relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring (Barad, interviewed by Kleinman, 2012, p.77).</p>	<p>Multimodal and Embodied Classroom Experiences while Considering Use of Space and Materials</p>
	<p>Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Challenges in the Context of FI</p>
<p>-Reggio Emilia: all children are capable, competent, powerful learners who bring to the school valuable theories and hypotheses of their own that are worthy of investigation” (Shelley &amp; Flessner, 2013, p. 645).</p> <p>-Students are responsible for asking questions, taking initiative and being productive (Edwards et al., 1998).</p> <p>-Daily 5: “the atmosphere in [their] rooms and [their] own roles, from trying to ‘manage’ students, rushing around the room putting out fires, to creating routines and procedures that [foster] independent literacy behaviours that [are] ingrained to the point of being habits” (Boushey &amp; Moser, 2006, p. 9).</p> <p>-students need more time to practice the language (Cammarata &amp; Tedick, 2012).</p> <p>-Multimodality encourages ownership of learning (Cudak, 2014).</p>	<p>Possibilities of Student Success</p>
<p>-too much time is given to academic subjects, and not enough to the language of instruction (Cammarata &amp; Tedick, 2012; Lyster, 2017).</p> <p>-Time on task: [teachers] “risk under-attending to the full range of diverse learning needs that exist in many Immersion classrooms” (Williams &amp; Tedick, 2008, p. 14).</p>	<p>Challenges within FI</p>

-Teachers are not comfortable teaching using various modes, such as music, poetry, movement (Carter, 2012).	
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### **The Relationship Between Themes**

It was evident that for the participants, different themes or questions carried stronger relationships to one another than other themes. This opens up the idea that participants value different educational pieces when trying to create multimodal, embodied literacy experiences for their students, which also means that their posthumanist practices will differ. Furthermore, I believe that these dominant relationships between themes are due to the participants' previous experiences or education, which have shaped their ways of thinking and doing. These relationships within the themes were evident through examples participants gave, the language they used, or participants going back and creating links from one question to another. Within each explanation of the participants, I have also included the relevant research from the Review of the Literature, as well as possible examples of lines of flight, or surprising moments from responses.

#### **Raquel's dominant relationships between themes.**

The dominant relationship between the themes "Multimodal and Embodied Literacy Experiences while Considering Use of Space and Materials" and "Challenges within FI" was evident when analyzing the data from Raquel's interview. When I asked Raquel about materials, she immediately referred to visuals, how visuals should be used, and how they should be integrated into the classroom spaces readily available for students to use in a variety of settings. To her, this (visuals), largely impacts students' learning and their ability to connect properly with the language (May 18, 2020). This view strongly connects to that of Jewitt (2008), who states that one must acknowledge not only the message, but the range of multimodal communication



offered by the individual. Furthermore, by offering resources such as visuals, Raquel is allowing her students to “exceed languages and literacies repertoires in pedagogical settings” by moving away from the typical memorization or rote learning that some still practice in oral language classroom settings (Toohey, Smythe, Dagenais & Forte, 2020, p.23).

Rachel also discussed how for an FI classroom one must also use the space effectively to ensure that students are understanding expectations, and how to use the resources correctly. Though, within the interview Raquel did mention she tends to be more linear in her teaching practices, she was quick to say that she understands that students learn at their own paces, in different ways, through different experiences. From this response, though Raquel is not currently a practicing teacher due to her role as a French immersion consultant, perhaps she would be open to the various lines of flight that her activities could present with the visuals she has spoken about. For example, a discussion about her visuals on sounds could turn into students playing “teacher,” and then break off into a Mathematics game with syllable counting. Or, perhaps students start off with a “Who am I” game with the sound cards (this is where other students describe the sound of the card the child is holding, and the child has to guess their card. Normally, it is attached to a headband on their forehead, or they simply hold it out), and then it breaks off into a spelling game. With visuals, there are many unexpected ways in which an activity can move, and lines of flight are always possible.

Regarding Challenges in FI, this was an area, which mentioned earlier, fell into the Cabinet of Curiosities. This is due to the unique, bizarre nature of some responses given, as well as not necessarily lining up with the Review of Literature research pulled from other studies. For example, Boushey and Moser (2006) discuss lack of time given to the language of instruction, whereas William and Tedick (2008) believe that teachers are not meeting the wide range of

needs within the classroom. Though Raquel believes that the challenges are largely due to teachers not being able to fully grasp the requirements of the Programs of studies, this is still a different issue than that introduced by Carter (2012), who blames lack of awareness or confidence in teachers when it comes to using the various modes efficiently within the academic subjects.

#### **Annette's dominant relationship between themes.**

In Annette's interview, she specifically stated that she believed that the classroom was the third teacher and she used it as a way to assist students in the language development. This makes Annette's dominant themes "multimodal & embodied literacy experiences while considering use of space and materials" as well as "multimodal & embodied conceptualizations." Annette appears to be one of the teachers that views education the most through a posthumanist lens, and practices these concepts, even unknowingly, as she uses materials, and spaces around her as this "third teacher." This ties directly into beliefs of Barad (2012), who, in the Review of Literature, was quoted as discussing how individuals do not exist, but are created through the intra-action of *things*, and are constantly evolving. This was made evident through Annette's use of things that created new lines of flight within her environment. A table becomes a bed, a sheet becomes a cape, and the classroom continues to evolve, creating new rhizomes, to meet the needs of the students. One piece of interest to note is the set-up of Annette's classroom; Annette has miniature, tangible versions of things that are labelled around her room, and students are able to use them to create. Anette has mini backpacks, crayons, community buildings, etc. Students will often begin using the activities as one thing, such as playing house or dress up, but will soon break off into new lines of flight and become something that Annette admits, she hadn't even thought of. Sometimes it has been a game of Follow the Leader, Simon Says, or students have even created musical bands or a student-created game. Though some may argue that this is more

of a Reggio Emilia approach, the fact that Annette places emphasis so heavily on the materials used, the freedom of students to create and re-create as well as the evidence proven within the interview that she attempts to “reconfigure classroom practice and curriculum” speaks to her unorthodox methods of instruction, or guidance (Snaza & Weaver, 2014, p.9). She also believed that it’s the classroom that needs to stimulate and create interest for students, which allows them to explore and use the various multimodal outlets available to them (May 21, 2020). This belief in classroom stimulation is a perfect example of a practitioner approach to posthumanism and the multimodal, embodied literacy expectations of this study.

Though Annette uses a variety of unique things, which are discussed both earlier and within her interview, she is also a firm believer in visuals, body movement and sound. Annette spoke to her use of Jolly Phonics, though more structured in nature, is a form of a multimodal, embodied literacy program. Annette always had the visuals available to students, however, also integrated more personal methods to assist in ensuring students success. Annette admitted to singing everything; from line-ups to lunchtime to Mathematics lessons, everything was sung. Furthermore, physical examples or visuals were accompanied. Just like Ohta (2001), Annette has a strong belief that the things within the environment play an active role in stimulating the brain, and it takes different items to stimulate an individual’s learning.

#### **Stella’s dominant relationship between themes.**

Though Stella believed that some experiences in the classroom were organic, she affirmed that she planned the majority of the multimodal, embodied experiences for her students. This was done through the use of Jolly Phonics; Stella stated during her interview how much she liked the visual posters for the wall, as well as the songs and little poems that went with each letter and sound. For the Jolly Phonics program, the songs, poems or rhymes are all scripted and ready for teacher use. It also shows the actions that go with each sound or letter, to ensure that

there is continuity between grades or teachers using the program. Stella's dominant relationships between themes were "challenges within FI," "multimodal & embodied conceptualization" and multimodal & embodied literacy while considering use of space and materials."

Though the goal in grade 1 is to not have students acquire "independent literacy habits" like in the older grades, she still used the space on the walls, or various areas in her classroom for specific areas to assist students in finding responses to different topics (Boushey & Moser, 2006, p. 9). Stella also runs many of her classroom lessons as centers and exploration; Stella found that this allows for students to explore materials and important concepts on their own terms, and come up with new ideas, or lines of flight, to continue to extend and practice their learning in other ways. This emphasis of importance of materials or *things*, ties into Hua, Otsuju and Pennycook (2017), that place a large emphasis on the importance of "body, space, gesture, senses and objects" (p.383). This emphasis was done through organizing her space and choosing correct materials to encourage and teach students the French language. All experiences for Stella's students, as well as their abilities, were different, because Stella based it on what her students decided to do and who they were (May 19, 2020). Some specific multimodal and embodied practices in play that Stella gave, were her students practicing with Jolly Phonics posters or tools, and then that activity evolving into students playing school, or even trying to organize small group activities through sharing and trading the materials. Just like in the other classrooms as well, students would at times, ask to mix various *things* from other centers, to make their "school" or activity even more engaging. Though this is described in the literature by Hua, Otsuju and Pennycook (2017) as experiences that individuals naturally engage in, it is important for teachers such as Stella, to recognize these lines of flight, encourage affect and allow agency to occur.

Once again, Stella discussed Challenges in FI through a completely different stance than the other teachers. To make her opinion even more interesting, none of the literature links to her views of what makes FI difficult. Williams and Tedick (2008) discuss “time on task), Carter (2012) discusses the teachers demonstrating difficulty in using various modes required of language teachers and Cammarata, Tedick (2012) and Lyster (2017) discuss lack of time given to the language of instruction. Stella, however, brings up lack of engagement and exhaustion of students in the afternoon as one of her biggest issues when trying to teach a language. Student stamina, or lack thereof, was never considered in the research included in the Review of Literature chapter.

**Demi’s dominant relationship between themes.**

Demi was quick to state that she planned her physical space before planning her lessons. This was because it allowed her to figure out where she wanted her students to go. Though Demi does not refer to the classroom as a third teacher (like with Annette), Demi still places an emphasis on materials, activities and where those activities will take place in order to ensure effectiveness of her students’ experiences. Demi’s dominant relationships between themes were “multimodal & embodied conceptualizations” and “multimodal & embodied literacy experiences while considering use of space & materials.” This does partially tie into the idea of posthumanism as seen from Snaza and Weaver (2014), as the importance of changing the classroom and teaching practices to respond to student-needs is part of this view. However, Demi does not discuss the mixing of *things* and her students, or the creations that occur through these opportunities. Demi strictly spoke to the types of literacy activities, the purpose, and how students were expected to use the materials. For Demi, things and student experiences are separate. Furthermore, because Demi confirmed that she planned all her students’ experiences, her centres and lessons are not organic in nature, which is, once again, part of posthumanism

(May 21, 2020). This need for organic creation is supported by Barad (2012), who insists that there needs to be “ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring” (p.77). Due to the planned nature of everything that seems to occur, as well as the way Demi described the materials and activities, Demi does not appear to place materials on the same level of importance as students, making lines of flight not possible within her lessons. However, Demi still uses materials to the best of her abilities to create multimodal, embodied experiences, but it appears differently than in other classrooms, such as Annette.

Demi is a large advocate for both Jolly Phonics as well as AIM, and, during her interview said that “everything, everything has an action” (May 21, 2020). This embodiment process, to assist with the development of orality in Early Years learners demonstrates her understanding that students need to engage their bodies to better understand spoken language (Seigel, 2006). But once again, each activity is specifically planned, without various lines of flight occurring. This does not mean that Demi does not see improvement amongst her students; for Demi, however, success depends on the child. For some, perhaps it is saying a full sentence in French, for others, it is understanding the action that goes with the word. Jewitt (2008) would agree with this measure of success, as he questions what constitutes as literary success in our world today.

#### **Andrée’s dominant relationship between themes.**

Andrée allowed her students to choose the direction in which their learning took place. For Andrée, she had three dominant themes that were evident from her interview. Andrée’s themes were “challenges within FI,” “multimodal & embodied conceptualizations” and “multimodal & embodied literacy experiences while considering use of space & materials.” Certain themes align quite heavily with the Reggio Emilia approach, which believes that children are all competent, capable, and powerful, that bring a sense of exploration, wonder and personal theories that are valuable (Shelley and Flessner, 2013). In her interview, Andrée discussed how

students would present their ideas (such as creating a veterinarian hospital), and she would guide them in the creation of what items were needed. However, she was also open with the fact that sometimes, this “exploration” to find what was needed took time. This is because, as suggested by Reggio Emilia, the students took the initiative, which can be a process. Students need take responsibility by asking questions, exploring and discussing (Edwards et al., 1998). Andrée also encouraged this process of exploration through changing the classroom environment often. She believed in students having spaces to jump, build and create as this creates curiosity, or affect. Though she did not specifically share the importance that the classroom lends in assisting in Early Years development and learning, it was made evident through her efforts in trying to keep the room exciting and fresh for the students by giving specific examples. Andrée did allude to students needing materials and spaces to learn, which, does in part tie to the idea that posthumanism requires the reconfiguration of space, materials and curriculum (Toohey et al., 2020). This is where I believe, for Andrée, the Reggio Emilia approach and the posthumanist practitioner approach collided.

Though there are some differences between Reggio Emilia and posthumanism, such as Reggio Emilia originating in Italy, from political issues, whereas posthumanism, at least the definition which is referred to in this research, is that of Jean-François Lyotard, who believes that “we are not just talking about the thematics or the decentering of the human in relation to either evolutionary, ecological, or technological coordinates/ we are also talking about how thinking confronts thematics, what thought has to become to face those challenges” (Wolfe, p.xv iii, 2010). This means that the posthumanism lens looks deeper than just themes or what issues may present due to specific themes, but looks to untangle to relationship between the themes and “stuff” that occurs from themes. Though, once again there is heavy documentation with Reggio

Emilia, it is not observed or discussed in the same manner as posthumanism in practice, with *things* being placed on the same level or as inspiring, the way that a practitioner's posthumanist approach would.

She tried to encourage inspiration of embodiment and multimodality through the use of songs, or games that created French learning through osmosis. Students created many of the resources, and Andrée frontloaded opportunities for their exploration (May 13, 2020). The allowance of students to “take up” the materials around them and create something new is an example of various lines of flight taking place, through the assemblages of desire that Andrée encouraged. One of the more prevalent examples given by Andrée was the “Cozy Cupboard.” There, students were able to crawl inside this cupboard and calm down, or turn it into another learning experience such as a rocket ship. Once again, these spaces can be used to create new lines of flight, as discussed by Andrée.

Though many of the teachers spoke about using Jolly Phonics, AIM or *Daily 5*, Andrée opted for American Sign Language. Though perhaps unusual, Andrée insisted on the buy-in from students, and how the body mixed with the language assisted in oral development and confidence amongst her students. As Jewitt (2008) would ask, what constitutes as literary success in today's communicative world? To Andrée, it is unconventional methods that her students can connect with. During her interview, Andrée further affirmed this when she said that sometimes, students would not remember a French word, but would always remember the action. Often times, the word would come after. Andrée said she chose to use actions, because she has naturally always spoken using her hands to assist in expressing herself, and felt that it was natural. This demonstrates Andrée's understanding of social semiotics, even if she does not use the specific terminology (Hua, Otsuju & Pennycook, 2017).



Andrée, like the other participants, gave a unique answer for Challenges in FI, that did not apply to the research included within the Review of the Literature. For Andrée, her biggest issue was the parents. Parental expectations of where their child should be at in terms of French ability, instead of accepting where their child was at. Once again, another unique perspective on what causes problems within Early years, FI.

**Jennifer's dominant relationship between themes.**

Jennifer had strong relationships between the themes “challenges within FI,” and “multimodal & embodied conceptualizations.” She was adamant to discuss that she selected her resources through offering various multimodal, embodied outlets for the students to practice their French, but she had a strong belief that their home life impacted their French ability. The resources she selected were also typically “child friendly,” meaning that they were placed in centres afterwards for students to practice certain skills (May 14, 2020). One of Jennifer's main resources was « Raconte-moi, » which is similar to Jolly Phonics. Each sound for « Raconte-moi, » had an action, song and story or poem to accompany it. Jennifer would ensure that the posters for this program were constantly available for students to see and use. Just like Andrée, Jennifer stated that often times, students would not remember the words in French, but would remember the action, which then prompted the word. Jennifer's views of multimodal and embodied conceptualizations align with that of Kress (2009), as she is constantly trying to evolve her physical and verbal practices, as the world is constantly changing. As Jennifer reminded me in the interview, students have more access to things through technology, lived experiences and opportunities. As a teacher, it was her belief that she was responsible to continue to evolve like the students, and recognize the various ways in which they would take up their language (Siegel 2006).

Jennifer was also able to give many examples of activities that took on other lines of flight, and how assemblages of desire sparked innovative creations by her students. One example that Jennifer gave was students mixing blocks and cubes, trying to create various types of machines or art. She said that her students will often ask to mix centers, and that she usually agrees, as it allows students to use their creativity and imagination, further questioning or deepening their learning. She has also seen students incorporate their knowledge coming from music in the house center, when for example, students began “making” pizza, inspired by the French song, « je suis une pizza » by Charlotte Diamond. Jennifer was able to give concrete examples of students unexpectedly taking on new lines of flight, even if, once again, she was unfamiliar with the vocabulary.

One of Jennifer’s main challenges that she discussed within FI was that there was not enough time for students to practice the language. Jennifer complained that by the time students entered the building, washed their hands, did their carpet routine, went through the various lessons or centers, and then ate snack, the day was over. Though this does not tie in exactly to the issues which Cammarata, Tedick (2012) and Lyster (2017) brought forth, it does tie into the basic idea that there is just not enough time. Whether that be for language instruction or otherwise, timing is still an issue.

### **Findings and Posthumanism**

In my analysis of the data, it was crucial for me to remember that posthumanism looks to encourage various understandings of what it means to be a human (Pennycook, 2016), as well as to be mindful that this is once again, a practitioner approach to posthumanism. This means that while looking at the responses from the interviews, I question how things, students, and materials entangle, creating alternate understandings. However, as Snaza and Weaver (2014) suggest, it is

more than entanglements; these happenings between things are relationships, or as Jean-François Lyotard would suggest, how our thinking challenges themes created. From the data collected and the application of information from the Review of the Literature, it was evident that Annette had the strongest connection to a posthumanist lens and its practices. Though other participants also pulled in certain elements of posthumanism, Annette's views were unlike many of the others, as she specifically stated that the "classroom is the third teacher." However, this does not take away from the idea that other teachers are using their spaces or *things*, bringing about the idea that teacher participants, in Early Years settings, practice posthumanism, though there are varying degrees.

### **Teachers as Posthumanists**

Before undertaking this research study, I had never thought about the theoretical stance of teachers. Through having the opportunity to interview the teachers in this study, it became evident to me that they appeared to be thinking like posthumanists, or as mentioned earlier, alluded to various degrees of practicing posthumanism, although they did not specifically identify these practices as posthuman. Below are some of the contributions from participants that provide reasoning for this belief.

Annette began by sharing how, to her, the classroom is a third teacher. She labelled everything. It wasn't just Annette, however, who felt the need to label. Stella, Raquel, Chloe, Demi, Andrée, and Rachel all used some form of visual signs. Moreover, it was not just teachers placing value on their classroom that demonstrated their theoretical stance. The participants expressed the belief that materials, opportunities, and things have an impact on students and their language acquisition. These teachers encouraged the process of *becoming*. As Andrée said,

If I take out my, my vet books and I'm like, "here's a few books on, on what it is to be a veterinarian—what they do, where they work, find some useful information so we can create our own vet clinic—then they have a goal, they have a reason to do it. They have the interest they have. And not all of them will be interested, and that's okay. Some of them will still be drawing unicorns and rainbows and you guys can draw unicorns and rainbows. "How about you make a unicorn to come to our vet clinic?"

This process aligns with the ideas of Snaza and Weaver (2014), who discuss and advocate for the reconfiguration of classroom practices and curriculum, while, Jean-François Lyotard would suggest challenging the themes or parameters of what a "vet clinic" would normally accept as patients. Furthermore, through intra-action of everyday materials, or *things* as seen with the vet clinic, students are engaging in the process of *becoming* to assist with their knowledge and language development. Students could also take on new lines of flight by turning the clinic into a zoo, or even a farm, leading to a further extension of learning.

When Stella discussed play-based language learning, she was describing students discovering, exploring, and reimagining. As for Annette and her students, the process of *becoming* led to richer language opportunities that created new lines of flight, or new understandings. Posthumanism "enables us to think against the various – often problematic – category segregations through which we have learned to make sense of the world, in the academic disciplines as well as in the constructs that inform and shape our everyday lives" (Bayne, 2018, p.4). In Annette's room, students are singers, actors, and investigators. All of this connects strongly to the embodiment and multimodal practices that create strong language

opportunities for FI students. It seemed that to some of the teachers that I interviewed, these practices of movement, language, and multimodal opportunities were exactly what students need to feel this sense of ownership. This process of becoming is what seems to lead to ownership.

Though Demi planned more inorganic French opportunities for her students, there was also still a process of becoming. Through mimicking and copying actions, students were French speakers who were repeating their learned vocabulary at home, or in other areas of the classroom, giving students new understandings of what language is.

This process of *becoming* through the spaces and materials made available by the teacher is also known as the conditions of possibility. This is what encourages the process of becoming and sets up opportunities for intra-action to take place. Andrée spoke about her “cozy cupboard” and how it allowed students to have a quiet space to relax, read, or calm down. Annette touched on how she used a table, old phone, or flipped desks to create scenes for plays, but also to give her students permission to be creative and take ownership of their learning (May 21, 2020).

Jennifer was honest about how she did not allow her students to play with everything; she said that students need to learn to be creative with what’s around them and become inspired with simple objects or things to create new stuff (May 14, 2020). Chloe and Stella also followed this mindset, as they did not believe in allowing everything to be put out for students but encouraged them to create new lines of flight with simple items.

### **Cabinet of Curiosities**

In Chapter 3, I discussed why a cabinet of curiosities became an important part of analyzing my data. This was because this process does not force data but allows it to exist freely, and be chaotic (Arnold, 2012).

The teachers within this study had varying levels of education; some had an education degree, while others had a master's or even degrees in other areas. As I mentioned earlier, our experiences shape our thoughts, which has an influence on teaching practices and educational beliefs. Because of this, teacher conceptualizations of multimodality and embodiment present differently in the classrooms. Teachers also work in varying demographics presents unique concerns when dealing with early childhood or young kids who are not ready for school. Students demonstrate readiness or lack of, by not being able to perform simple tasks such as holding pencils or scissors properly. Teachers also must identify how to best organize their space and materials.

Because of these reasons, and others I presented in the previous chapters, the cabinet of curiosities provided a place for research findings to exist without having to fit it in with other themes, subthemes, or concepts. Instead, the data can be present without modifications.

I feel one of the most important components of this is the idea that every teacher viewed Challenges in Early Learning FI differently. As a researcher, it forces me to question what we are doing as a program that is bringing about so many difficulties for our teachers and the learners of this program.

### **Imagining a French Immersion Assemblage**

In this final section, I bring together the many ideas the teachers in this study and the theories of posthumanism that have instructed me to imagine an assemblage of multimodal, embodied literacy learning in a French Immersion Kindergarten. Below is an example of students learning about French, scientific vocabulary that starts as an embodied, multimodal experience and evolves into a posthumanism learning experience.

Students in the classroom have been exploring the various parts of nature, and the vocabulary that goes with what is seen outdoors in their French, Kindergarten immersion classroom. Students are allowed to touch, pick, collect, smell and play with what is found outside. The schoolyard is full of trees, bushes, birds' nests, sandboxes and other multimodal, embodied opportunities for students to participate in, while practice their French vocabulary. This teaching of vocabulary is done by the teacher walking around, pointing to *things* found, and sharing the word with groups of students. After the small group visits, students meet in a circle by the playground for the teacher to review and show what students have found in French.

After a few classes of being outside and experiencing nature and practicing their French language vocabulary for what students have seen, students are each given a bag to collect what they feel represents nature. Students take their time, walking around, picking up leaves, twigs, berries or anything else that they feel speaks to them. Students are to pick up the items, smell, touch and observe, say the French vocabulary word, then place the item in their bag. Students then return to the classroom.

In the classroom, students sit in a circle, and have the opportunity to present their findings with their French vocabulary and explain why they chose a certain material or thing.

The teacher, after all of this, gives students the time to create their vision of what the outdoors looks like. There are various conditions of possibility, such as tables, the floor, loft areas and art centers. Students are able to use whatever materials in the classroom are desired to assist with this. These assemblages of desire lead students into the process of intra-action and *becoming*. Students are suddenly artists, architects, but most importantly, French speakers. Clay, play-doh, containers, beads, blocks...Students are able to pull from wherever they need to in order to represent their idea.

Once students are done their creations, they are able to present them to the class, using their French vocabulary for the basic materials or *things* used, and explain how their creation represents nature. Some students have used feathers or twigs stuck in clay and talk about birds and trees. Other students have tried to create sandboxes using sticks and blocks. The assemblages are different for each student, as is the finished result.

Due to posthumanism being referred to through a practitioner's lens throughout this research, I have included a narrative that demonstrates areas where students may see opportunities to break off into new lines of flight, due to the assemblages of desire and the process of becoming. Through the French discussions and multimodal, embodied practices outside of touching, smelling and experiencing, students are taking up the language. Once in the classroom, students are able to further understand these practices through the creation of something new, allowed and encouraged by the teacher.

Though a practitioner's approach to posthumanism may seem complex, there are opportunities in classrooms daily that allow teachers to encourage new lines of flight, thus, encouraging new learning opportunities. The key is to look for these chances, encourage it, and not be afraid to take risks with the students. By teaching in this manner, students are learning to express their oral knowledge through using previous experiences and express it with their bodies.

### **Summary**

By weaving the data collected to the research discussed within the Review of the Literature, the connections become clearer for the thematic analysis, as well as a practitioner's approach to posthumanism through the various lines of flight discussed throughout this chapter. Though the participants did not specifically reference research or specific teaching ideologies, the responses and analysis allowed for the literature to support or align with teaching practices in



Early Years FI. Furthermore, referencing and going back to the Review of the Literature further demonstrates and supports the choice made to include Challenges within FI as the key component within the cabinet of curiosities. This is due, once again to the idea that a Cabinet of Curiosities is meant to include moments or items that are erratic, unique or surprising. The participants' responses proved this, as all were different, and forced the research to question what can and should be done to further support FI teachers in their classrooms.

Through synthesizing and analyzing research, it allows the researcher to see the patterns in the data, to hopefully respond to research questions held by the researcher.

## Chapter 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand how educators conceptualize multimodal, embodied literacy experiences in the context of Early Years, French immersion classrooms. As a FI teacher, it is important for teachers to recognize strategies in other classrooms, in order to provide rich language opportunities in their own classrooms. Furthermore, there is not a lot of research on teacher conceptualizations regarding multimodal, embodied literacy practices in early years classrooms, except for one American study (Peker & Regalla, 2016). However, this study, as stated throughout, looks at Early Years classrooms, which is considered to be Kindergarten and Grade 1. The findings of this study demonstrate that the participants create multimodal, embodied literacy opportunities for their students; however, none are aware of or use the specific language surrounding these concepts. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that teachers do not see voice and body as separate, but as one when trying to acquire a language. This became evident when research questions were posed regarding the body or voice, and the participants consistently included the other in the response. Finally, when asked, "...can't you do one without the other" teachers unanimously agreed that the two work together, especially in language settings. Though this is something that we naturally do in Early Years settings, I have witnessed, and discussed with educators at other grade levels, who have never considered voice and body as together, influencing their teaching practices. Teachers in higher grade levels expect students to know the language, thus, using fewer visual cues or movement tricks to assist students in their language development. However, this study proves the importance of educators evolving their methods, to include these types of literary, embodiment practices, as the language does continue to become more difficult throughout the grade levels. This idea of including

multimodal and embodiment practices also brings about the idea of what makes good multimodal, embodiment practices?

Through using a posthumanist, practitioner lens, I am able to understand that the teachers in this study think, to some degree, in posthumanist ways. The participants view materials as having importance, and having a “place” in the classroom. Though not all view the materials as having a power to inspire a student to *become*, there is a need for teachers to have materials that they know will engage students.

Next, I present some concluding ideas about the research. Following this, I provide recommendations for school districts, school sites, universities, and teachers that flow from the findings of this study.

## **Conclusions**

In this research, I attempted to answer an overarching question regarding teacher conceptualizations and multimodal, embodied literacy practices in classrooms by interviewing eight FI kindergarten and grade 1 teachers. My curiosity is due to the fact that even though I encourage these experiences for my own students, I don’t understand all that multimodal, embodied practices encompass, and I felt the need to learn more, and to share my findings. This turned my research into not only seeing if teachers understood these practices, but what they were doing in their classrooms to encourage these happenings. With these findings, I was hoping to assist teachers, administrators, and district leaders to understand some of the ways that teachers are encouraging language learning in their classrooms, and the type of professional development teachers might need to improve students’ language learning in immersion settings. I now present the conclusions made from the initial findings of my research.

### *Conclusions from interview readings*

When considering the questions, “What is your understanding of embodiment?” and “What is your understanding of multimodality?” there were a few key pieces that became evident: teachers are encouraging and creating opportunities for students to experience multimodality and embodied literacy; teachers are unaware of the terms “multimodality” and “embodiment”; and teachers are facing different challenges. The following conclusions can be taken from these findings that the data presented.

Teachers in Early Years, FI classrooms are using the materials or things available to them to create multimodal, embodied experiences for students. However, as suggested earlier, these experiences are created differently, as it depends on demographics, materials available, or school-based resources. However, many of these “occurrences” are planned, and are guided by the teacher. Furthermore, an interesting idea that came about was that teachers would use their materials the same way if they were in an English-based classroom, as the number of ELL students have risen in the years. This means that these students would require the same types of supports as French immersion students in order to sufficiently learn English.

Teachers, though using multimodality and embodiment, are completely unaware of these terms. Teachers were leaning towards vocabulary such as “whole body learning,” or “kinesthetic learning.” Though some may find that not using consistent vocabulary is not important, it is in fact, crucial. According to Hyland and Tse (2007) academic vocabulary is a foundational piece in teachers being able to have professional conversations and move forward with their practices. Hyland and Tse believe that “communities undermine the usefulness of such lists” of vocabulary. One example would be the importance that is placed on words such as “summative or formative” when discussing assessment. All teachers understand the difference, and use this vocabulary

regularly. Perhaps if this were the same for language learning, practices for teachers would be able to broaden, and improve more quickly.

When I looked deeper into the research, more data came to life that must be addressed. Firstly, participants had different relationships to the different questions and themes. While some, such as Annette, appeared to value the environment as a third teacher, and treated it as so, and had a strong posthumanist approach to her teaching practices, others held the belief that though the environment was critical, that were the lessons, and resources provided by the teacher that were just, if not more important. Due to emphasis placed on different key components that make up a classroom, various thematic themes that arose from the data appeared to be more important for some, than for others. This led to the creation of the diagrams, and the analysis the participants with the information provided by the Literature Review from chapter 2.

Lastly, none of the teachers were able to agree upon what the main challenges were for French immersion. Responses not only differed from one participant to the next, but also did not line up with ideas from researchers within the Review of the Literature. As a researcher, I cannot help but think how this idea could be its own research concern, as the responses varied to the point of being placed in the Cabinet of Curiosities, in order to honor its bizarre, unique nature.

***Teachers naturally do what they need to learn.*** This means that some participants admitted to not being able to learn from a binder, or from just sitting. There is a need to “do,” to learn. Because of this need to do more than just sit and listen, the participants admitted to trying to find as many outlets, or modes, to use as possible to grasp and keep the attention of their curious students. By creating these types of opportunities, the participants hope to keep students engaged, and to encourage language learning. As Demi said, “If I have to look at a binder, I am not motivated. But if I could go to a workshop that is hands-on I can use, absolutely...”

***Teachers need to know what good multimodal, embodiment practices look like.***

Intention is key. Though it is wonderful to have a classroom full of varying materials, *things* or resources, teachers need to know how to use this “stuff” around them. Good multimodal, embodiment practices do not come from allowing kids to wonder the room, creating mess and not completing tasks. As Jennifer and the other participants shared, it takes practice and knowing your materials, visuals or resources, and how to use them properly to inspire, engage and encourage learning. Once again, this takes time for educators to learn; professional development in how to use materials at various grade levels would be of some importance, as well as specific lesson plans created for teachers to follow and share with one another to ensure clarity and understanding during times of collaboration.

***Teachers need consistency with terminology.*** Teachers, just like students, need consistency with terminology. Throughout the research, teachers were using a variety of different terms to describe multimodality and embodiment, but they didn’t understand the language in the multimodal, embodiment questions. Participants used language such as “kinesthetic,” “body spelling,” “learning styles,” and even “environmental print.” For teachers to move forward in their teaching practices and to be able to have discussions surrounding their professional practices, there needs to be a common vocabulary for teachers to use. Every teacher used a different term when discussing multimodality and embodiment.

***Teacher challenges in the workplace.*** When asked what the challenges are in the classroom for FI, each teacher gave a different response. For some, it was parents not understanding age and ability. For others, it was motivation, attendance, lack of time, and lack of language. Why there are a variety of issues is unclear; however, it makes one wonder whether

this is a demographic issue, school issue, or issues stemming from previous educational experiences.

***Relationships to themes and subthemes.*** The participating teachers had different relationships to the themes and subthemes from one another. When looking at the visuals from Chapter 6, it is evident that all of the participating teachers value different aspects of teaching differently. For some, the classroom is the third teacher. For others, resourcing comes after organizing the physical space of the classroom. The relationships become evident when reading the interviews and seeing the connections the teachers made between questions, and when using physical examples to demonstrate classroom happenings.

***Posthumanism and education.*** It was interesting to see how the participants valued materials, space, and the process of becoming in the room. Even though all participants appeared to handle their materials and centres differently, the end goal was the same. The teachers wanted their students to use the environment around them to be creative and learn. This philosophy makes it difficult to ignore teacher beliefs and the theoretical framework selected for this study, as educators and stakeholders are trying to encourage educational practices to evolve.

As referred to earlier in this study, Annette is an excellent example of using the environment as a teacher and placing value and emphasis upon the *things* that she uses. Though she did not have the specific terminology to discuss the process of *becoming* and intra-action, she was able to describe how students “changed” an object to meet needs and turn it into “something else.” Jennifer talked about how her students would ask to mix some centers; though, once again, she did not have the specific vocabulary, she was able to go into detail about how her students created new lines of flight with *things* available to them.

*A variety of stories.* Each participant had a different, unique story. This has shaped, and will continue to shape, the way individuals teach. Stella came from a province where students were speaking fluent French in grade 1. Demi comes from a school where attendance isn't a priority for some families. Because of these experiences, the participants have shaped their environments to better support the students in their rooms.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations, based on the study's findings, analysis of the data, and conclusions are being given to assist teachers, administrators, and district leaders within Edmonton Catholic School District, as well as those teaching in French immersion university programs.

### ***Teachers***

1. Seven out of eight used registered, school-approved resources for their language instruction program. All teachers should use phonics programs that incorporate embodied learning, such as Jolly Phonics, « raconte-moi » or AIM.
2. None of the eight participants used common language while discussing literacy practices. All teachers should use common language amongst teachers when discussing language instruction.
3. None of the teachers agreed upon Challenges in FI. Challenges vary for FI teachers, and we need resources to support the issues that arise.

### ***Administrators***

1. Five out of eight participants both used and spoke highly of the literacy program Jolly Phonics as a resource; thus, schools should be investing in programs that are teacher approved and have current data that demonstrate their potential.



2. The concluding data demonstrates that none of the teachers used common language when discussing multimodality and embodiment practices. This means that districts need to encourage professional development to ensure that teachers are aware of terminology and latest research to improve FI programs.
3. The concluding data demonstrates that each teacher viewed challenges in FI differently. Administrators should be having open discussions with staff to attempt to find solutions, unique to their schools and demographics, to some of these issues.

### ***District leaders***

1. District leaders, such as consultants, should be looking at how programs such as AIM or Jolly Phonics work, to provide more support for teachers and administrators. Because this resource has support from experienced participants in this study and there are a variety of multimodal opportunities, consultants should have experience with this resource.
2. The concluding data demonstrates that none of the teachers used common language when discussing multimodality and embodiment practices. This means that consultants need to present professional development to ensure that teachers are aware of terminology and latest research to improve FI programs. As of right now, this has not been a priority.

### ***French immersion universities***

1. FI universities should be looking at a variety of multimodal resources and how they are used in the classroom. The lessons need to go beyond the textbooks to prepare future teachers for realistic situations.
2. Because the concluding data presented demonstrated that none of the FI teachers had a common language for various components of language learning, universities, specifically

FI universities, need to ensure that there is common language and adequate research to ensure that teachers are prepared and able to have rich discussions to improve their teaching practices.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

During this research, a variety of other questions surfaced which would make for excellent research topics in the future. These future research topics could include:

1. What influences the challenges FI teachers face in early years classrooms?
2. What is the link between student success and literacy programs such as Jolly Phonics or AIM in FI classrooms?
3. How do multimodality and embodiment practices influence brain development in second-language learning?
4. What difficulties do FI universities face when teaching literacy classes to future FI teachers?
5. What impact has COVID-19 had on teacher practices in FI classrooms?
6. How does personal identity influence or impact teachers and their practices within a language classroom?

### **Revisiting Assumptions from Chapter 1**

During this research, I made three assumptions. Here I return to discuss these assumptions in relation to my findings. The first assumption I made was that all students in French immersion would be coming to grade 1 with some exposure to French. This assumption was not true in some of the cases. In discussing French ability with Demi, some students came from their English program into their FI program after kindergarten. However, this assumption

was true for the other grade 1 teachers. For kindergarten, many students came from “repeat families” or families where a parent had gone to French immersion.

The second assumption I made during this research was that many students in FI are English language learners (ELL). This assumption was only partially true. Because some participants are in schools with higher socioeconomic status, there is a smaller ELL population. However, it should be mentioned that each classroom did have some ELL students.

The last assumption I made was that the participating consultant would be familiar with the terms multimodality and embodiment of literacy. Though she was familiar with the process, this terminology was new to her, as it was with the other participants.

The assumptions made during this process prove that though there were components that were true, or partially true, and there were ideas such as assumptions about common language and French exposure that held no validity. This leads to the idea that though assumptions can be dangerous in research, they can also be dangerous in the field of education.

### **Research Reflections**

When I started this doctoral journey, I knew I wanted to do something that would improve the classroom situation, and knowledge, of FI teachers. There has not been much research done regarding best FI practices in language classrooms, and I felt a need to contribute to this topic in some way.

This research confirmed some suspicions I already had as a teacher: teachers are facing different issues in their classrooms; teachers are using lots of self-made resources to fill a void; teachers are not on the same page regarding terminology and literacy.

Though there is still much more research that must be conducted, I feel that this is an excellent start for Alberta teachers in understanding what other teachers are doing and what we

need to improve as a professional community to move forward. I hope in the future this research can continue in a quantitative manner, looking at how the embodiment of literacy can assist in brain development for young learners.

I hope that this research can assist beginning and seasoned teachers and revitalize the discussions we are having when considering what literacy looks like in French immersion classrooms.

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