

PRIORITIES IN THE RECRUITMENT OF FRENCH IMMERSION TEACHERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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### **Abstract**

The study entitled 'Priorities in the Recruitment of French Immersion Teachers in British Columbia' compared the priorities of French immersion parents and school district Directors of Human Resources on issues surrounding French immersion teacher recruitment. A survey was sent to 44 Directors of Human Resources, representing all school districts with French immersion programs in the province, with a response rate of 64 percent. One hundred surveys were sent to French immersion parents in the province with a response rate of 48 percent. Seven follow-up interviews were conducted.

The results of the survey revealed a consensus amongst parents, Directors of Human Resources and university French immersion pre-service teacher education programs in British Columbia on the minimum expected level of French proficiency for a French immersion teacher. Parents and Directors of Human Resources rated language skills as a top priority followed by teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of French culture. Nonetheless, respondents from both groups qualified their rankings by saying that it would be undesirable to possess one set of characteristics at the expense of another. Parents expressed a preference for francophone French immersion teachers, particularly from Quebec, and may therefore be surprised by the high number of anglophones teaching in the program. Directors of Human Resources expressed a preference for hiring graduates from the French immersion stream of pre-service teacher education programs followed by bilingual anglophones. They suggested that anglophones tended to be local teachers who, due to their familiarity with school culture, would be easier to retain than teachers from elsewhere.

Using a teacher shortage spectrum formulated for this study, Directors of Human Resources provided the average number of job applicants for a typical job opening in the French immersion and English streams in the 2001 – 2002 school-year in their school district. A shortage of French immersion teachers was found to exist in British Columbia. The shortage is worse in rural school districts than in urban school districts. No shortage of teachers was reported in the English stream. Encouragingly, all school districts reported that they verify the level of French proficiency

of French immersion teacher candidates although the tools used to do so vary significantly from district to district, from checking course work credentials only to having prospective immersion teachers complete oral and written tests. Parents and Directors of Human Resources expressed opposition to lowering hiring standards in order to address and shortage of French immersion teachers.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Figures .....	vii
List of Tables.....	ix
Dedication .....	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 <i>Concerns over the French language proficiency of French immersion teachers</i> .....	2
1.2 <i>The Teacher shortage: sufficient reason to lower hiring standards?</i> .....	2
1.3 <i>Purpose</i> .....	4
1.3 <i>Research questions</i> .....	4
1.4 <i>Overview of the study</i> .....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	7
2.1 <i>French language proficiency requirements at British Columbia pre-service teacher education programs</i> .....	7
2.2 <i>A Pan-Canadian perspective on French language proficiency and the French immersion teacher</i> .....	10
2.3 <i>Teacher certification in British Columbia</i> .....	12
2.4 <i>The Fully qualified French immersion teacher</i> .....	14
2.5 <i>First language status</i> .....	15
2.6 <i>Teacher supply and demand</i> .....	17
2.7 <i>Entry versus continuing standards</i> .....	23
2.8 <i>Responsibilities of the Director of Human Resources</i> .....	24
2.9 <i>Parental expectations</i> .....	27
2.10 <i>Summary and conclusion</i> .....	28
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	32
3.1 <i>Participants</i> .....	32
3.1.1 <i>Geographical areas</i> .....	32
3.1.2 <i>Directors of Human Resources</i> .....	32
3.1.3 <i>Parents</i> .....	33

3.2	<i>Procedures</i>	34
3.2.1	Questionnaire	34
3.2.2	Response rates	34
3.2.3	Semi-structured interviews	34
3.3	<i>Measures</i>	35
3.3.1	Description of questions	35
3.3.2	Research questions and the questionnaire	36
3.3.3	Interview questions and the questionnaire	38
3.4	<i>Coding</i>	39
3.4.1	Questionnaire	39
3.4.2	Interviews	40
3.5	<i>Analysis</i>	40
Chapter 4:	<i>Results and Discussion</i>	42
4.1	<i>Respondent Demographics</i>	42
4.1.1	Response rates	42
4.1.2	Discussion	43
4.2	<i>Research question 1</i>	44
4.2.1	First language status	45
4.2.1.1	Results of survey	45
4.2.1.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments	46
4.2.2	Bilingual francophones by place of origin and bilingual anglophones	47
4.2.2.1	Results of survey	50
4.2.2.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments	52
4.2.3	Formal qualifications	53
4.2.3.1	Results of survey	53
4.2.3.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments	54
4.2.4	Level of French proficiency	55
4.2.4.1	Results of survey	55
4.2.4.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments	56
4.2.5	Summary of results for research question 1	56
4.2.6	Discussion of research question 1	59
4.3	<i>Research question 2</i>	63
4.3.1	Results of survey	64
4.3.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments	66
4.3.3	Discussion	67
4.4	<i>Research question 3</i>	69
4.4.1	Results of survey	70

4.4.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments .....	72
4.4.3	Discussion .....	75
4.5	<i>Research question 4</i> .....	76
4.5.1	Results of survey .....	76
4.5.2	Results of interviews and anecdotal comments .....	80
4.5.3	Discussion .....	81
4.6	<i>Research question 5</i> .....	83
4.6.1	Results of survey .....	84
4.6.2	Discussion .....	86
4.7	<i>Research question 6</i> .....	88
4.7.1	Results .....	89
4.7.2	Discussion .....	93
Chapter 5: Implications and Areas for Further Study .....		94
5.1	<i>The Testing of French proficiency at the school district level</i> .....	94
5.2	<i>The Teacher shortage and entry standards at the school district level</i> .....	95
5.3	<i>Teacher certification</i> .....	98
5.4	<i>The French language skills of the French immersion teacher</i> .....	99
5.5	<i>Summary</i> .....	100
References .....		102
Appendix A: Consent form for participants .....		106
Appendix B: Letter of explanation for participants .....		107
Appendix C: Questionnaire for Directors of Human Resources .....		108
Appendix D : Questionnaire for parents .....		112
Appendix E: Unpublished pilot study of pre-service French immersion French proficiency tests at Canadian universities .....		115

### List of Figures

1	Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' level of French competence based on a five point scale.....	43
2	Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' degrees of agreement on a seven point scale with the assertion that bilingual francophones are more desirable French immersion teacher candidates than bilingual anglophones .....	46
3	Desirability of hiring graduates from the French Core stream of a British Columbia teacher pre-service program on a seven point scale .....	48
4	Desirability of hiring graduates from the French Core stream of a British Columbia teacher pre-service program using the Collapsing Method.....	48
5	Minimum level of French competence of a French immersion teacher expected by parents and Directors of Human Resources based on a five point rubric.....	56
6	Using the Upward Collapsing Method, a comparison of the percentages of parents and Directors of Human Resources in agreement with the desirability of hiring French immersion teacher candidates by first language status, formal education and for francophones, place of origin.....	58
7	Average number of applicants per typical French immersion and English stream job opening in the 2001 - 2002 school year in British Columbia on a seven point scale .....	71
8	Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of lowering standards of French language competence in the event of a teacher shortage on a seven point scale.....	77
9	Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of lowering standards of French language competence in the event of a teacher shortage using the Collapsing Method. ....	78
10	Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of hiring French immersion teachers without an educational background in second language methodology on a seven point scale.....	79



11	Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of hiring French immersion teachers without an educational background in second language methodology using the Collapsing Method.....	70
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### List of Tables

1	Five Levels of French Competence .....	8
2	First Language Status of Canadian French Immersion Teachers .....	13
3	Teacher Supply Scale.....	18
4	Correspondence of Research Questions to Questionnaire.....	32
5	Semi-structured Interview Questions.....	33
6	The Collapsing Method.....	39
7	Mean Ratings of French Immersion Teacher Candidates by First Language Status, Formal Education and for Bilinguals, Place of Origin .....	43
8	Ratings of French Immersion Teacher Candidates by First Language Status, Formal Education and for Francophones, Place of Origin, Using the Collapsing Method .....	44
9	Comparison of Mean Rankings of Four Sets of Skills and Attributes of the French Immersion Teacher by Parents and Directors of Human Resources .....	58
10	Combined Mean Rankings of Four Sets of Skills and Attributes of the French Immersion Teacher on a Nine Point Scale .....	59
11	Comparison of Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Priorities on the Expected Level of French Language Competence of the French Immersion Teacher.....	83
12	Comparison of Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Priorities on the Formal Qualifications of a French Immersion Teacher.....	83
13	Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Rankings of Four Sets of Skills and Attributes of the French immersion Teacher .....	84
14	Comparison of Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Priorities on the First Language Status and Bilingual Francophone Place of Origin of a French Immersion Teacher.....	85

## Dedication

*To the memory of my father, Jack Rantanen.*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In an elementary school in British Columbia, a parent recently complained that her seventh grade daughter had not had a single native French speaker as a teacher in her eight years in French immersion at that particular school. The principal responded that there were many different qualities that an administrator looked for in a French immersion teacher and that the best person for the job was not necessarily a francophone. In the parent's estimation, francophone teachers were clearly the preferred candidates for French immersion. The principal emphasized other priorities such as classroom management skills and personality. The conflicting expectations and priorities in this anecdote raise several issues: Do parents and administrators share the same priorities with respect to the recruitment of French immersion teachers? What qualities and skills are of greatest importance when hiring French immersion teachers? Would most French immersion parents prefer to see only francophone teachers or are bilingual anglophones also desirable French immersion teachers?

The first widely publicized French immersion program started in Saint-Lambert, Québec, in 1963 (Rebuffot, 1993). Parents were unhappy with the level of French language instruction in their schools and wanted their children to participate in a program where they might achieve a much higher level of French language competence. Since then, the French immersion program has gained momentum in Canada and currently, there are approximately 32,000 students enrolled in French immersion in British Columbia alone (Canadian Parents for French, 2003). In French immersion, children generally receive 100% of their instruction in French from Kindergarten to Grade three or four, after which they receive between 50 - 80% of their instruction in French. In high school, French immersion students continue to take content-area courses in French, but the instructional time in French is gradually reduced. In Core French, students do not receive content-area instruction in French, but in Grades five through seven, they study French 80 minutes per week. High school French is also offered as a subject, but is not integrated with content-areas as it is in French immersion.

### 1.1 *Concerns over the French language proficiency of French immersion teachers*

The level of French proficiency of the French immersion teacher is extremely important. The teacher is virtually the sole model of the French language for most anglophone students who also gain limited exposure to the language from authentic materials such as books, videos, computer programs and web-sites. If the teacher's French is laden with errors, there is little hope that he or she will be a good model for the students. Furthermore, serious deficiencies in French language skills impair the teacher's ability to provide corrective feedback, and to plan and teach language lessons and content-area lessons in French. When teaching content-area subjects, a small vocabulary, poor discourse skills and low oral fluency can limit the range of ideas the teacher is able to express and reduces his or her confidence to express those ideas.

To date, however, there is no consensus at the provincial, university or district levels as to the minimum acceptable level of French language proficiency required to teach in French immersion, nor is there agreement on whether that level should be established, or how the level would be determined. Teachers who meet provincial teaching standards in British Columbia, but have failed the universities' pre-service education French language competency test, are routinely assigned to French immersion positions by school districts. This inconsistency suggests that either the university's standards are unrealistically high or, the school districts' standards too low. Calls for national benchmarks of French language competency for French immersion teachers in the literature tell us that many academics are already concerned about the level of French language competency of some French immersion teachers (Day & Shapson, 1996; Flewelling, 1995; Frisson-Rickson & Rebuffot, 1986; Moeller, 1988; Obadia & Martin, 1995).

### 1.2 *The Teacher shortage: sufficient reason to lower hiring standards?*

It seems problematic that at a time when many school districts are reporting shortages of French immersion teachers, enrolment in French immersion in British Columbia is rising and the federal government has officially announced a goal of "doubling within ten years the number of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both English and French" (Government of

Canada, 2002). In order to achieve this goal, one hundred and thirty seven million dollars of federal funds have been earmarked for second language instruction under the Action Plan for Official Languages (Dion, 2003).

When British Columbia school districts do not have enough fully qualified French immersion teaching applicants to fill French immersion classrooms, what is the result? Hiring authorities may be tempted to lower standards to fill vacancies that arise suddenly, particularly if their pool of applicants is limited. When teachers are needed at the last minute, the recruitment process may be accelerated with less rigorous checking of French language competence or by omitting this step altogether. When French immersion teaching applicants know that they will more easily obtain employment in the French immersion stream than in the English stream, might they overstate their level of French language competence? Would such exaggerations go unnoticed or is there a process in place to check language skills objectively?

A French immersion teacher shortage has been reported (Macfarlane & Hart, 2002). However, the extent of the shortage in British Columbia is unclear. Because the existence of a teacher shortage has been the justification for accelerating the teacher certification process in some jurisdictions (Pipho, 1998), it is important to clearly define a shortage of teachers. To some, a teacher shortage means an absence of applicants, while to others, it may mean an increasing level of difficulty in recruiting those applicants who fully meet the qualifications for French immersion teaching. Given that important policy decisions can be made based on the assertion that a shortage of teachers exists, a careful definition of the term would be prudent to erase any possible confusion.

A general teacher shortage has been declared to exist in many countries including the United States, Australia and Great Britain. Hiring bonuses and other incentives have been offered to Math and Science specialists. In the United States, a controversial certification process called "alternative certification" has been implemented to give teaching certificates to university graduates who have little or no teacher education background. British Columbia public school teachers must hold teaching certificates from accredited teacher education programs, but do

French immersion teachers have any requisite background knowledge for specialization in French immersion such as second language methodology?

### 1.3 *Purpose*

The focus of this study is two-fold. First, this study examines current priorities and practices to select French immersion teachers in British Columbia school districts. Since acceptance to the teacher-on-call list seems to be the recognized route to permanent classroom placement in many school districts in British Columbia (Grimmett & Echols, 2001), this study will focus on selection practices at the district level, the gateway to teaching French immersion in public schools. While this investigation operates within the context of the British Columbia College of Teachers and university-level policies and practices, it seeks to provide a snapshot of French immersion teacher selection practices and priorities at the district level in British Columbia.

Second, the priorities of French immersion parents and school district hiring authorities will be compared in order to see if these two groups of stakeholders share the same priorities and vision for French immersion or whether they have clashing expectations. Parents want the best for their children and without their continued enthusiasm for the program, French immersion enrolment would decline. Hiring authorities, at the same time, have the moral obligation to provide the highest quality program possible. Are parental expectations being met? Are hiring authorities fulfilling their moral obligations?

### 1.3 *Research questions*

1a. What are the most sought-after characteristics for a French immersion teacher according to Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia?

1b. What are the most sought-after characteristics for a French immersion teacher according to parents in British Columbia?

2a. Which is of greater importance to Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?



- 2b. Which is of greater importance to parents in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?
3. How severe is the British Columbia teacher shortage in French immersion according to Directors of Human Resources?
- 4a. In what ways, if any, would Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia be willing to modify their expectations of French immersion program recruitment practices during a shortage of French immersion teachers?
- 4b. In what ways, if any, would parents in British Columbia be willing to modify their expectations of French immersion program recruitment practices during a shortage of French immersion teachers?
5. What means do Directors of Human Resources employ to screen the French language skills of prospective French immersion teachers in British Columbia?
6. Is there a match or a mismatch between parental views and the views of British Columbia school district Directors of Human Resources on priorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers?

#### 1.4 *Overview of the study*

In Chapter One, I have shown how the present system of verifying the French proficiency of immersion teachers during their teacher education, certification and recruitment appears to rely on the final judgment of school district hiring authorities. In Chapter Two, I will present an overview of the relevant literature and of where key questions pertaining to French immersion teacher recruitment remain unanswered. I will then present the case for investigating the tools used to verify French proficiency at the school district level, my definition of a fully qualified French immersion teacher, and offer a rationale for finding out what are the highest priorities to parents and hiring authorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers. I will also consider the question of teacher supply as it pertains to teacher qualifications and ponder the acceptability of compromise in the case of a teacher shortage. In Chapter Three, I will describe the survey and interviews which I conducted to answer the research questions. I will also

describe the response rates and analysis method. In Chapter Four, I will share and discuss the findings of the study by answering each of the research questions in order. In Chapter Five, I will outline the implications of this study which are relevant to French immersion parents, policy-makers, hiring authorities and all those interested in French immersion. Finally, I will suggest areas for further research based on the findings of this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of chapter two is to summarize the formal qualifications of a French immersion<sup>1</sup> teacher as defined by the British Columbia College of Teachers and other relevant literature, to indicate how these qualifications are obtained through university teacher education programs and British Columbia College of Teachers, to situate the issue of French immersion teacher qualifications in the context of the oft cited teacher shortage, and to provide an overview of the academic discussion on standards of French language proficiency for French immersion teachers. In conclusion, I will show how the research questions spring naturally from the gaps in the relevant literature.

### 2.1 *French language proficiency requirements at British Columbia pre-service teacher education programs*

Academics have long expressed concerns over the level of French language proficiency of French immersion teachers and the lack of a minimum standard of French language competence, (Day & Shapson, 1996; Flewelling, 1995; Frisson-Rickson & Rebuffot, 1986; Moeller, 1988; Obadia & Martin, 1995). In 1995, Obadia and Martin wrote, "Members of the education community now appear to be more concerned about the quality of [French immersion] teachers than about the quantity" (p. 94).

In 1988, Moeller underscored the need for a test of French language competence test for pre-service teachers, "[N]umerous students who graduate from an FSL teacher education program ... may have completed the programs but are by no means proficient in the language" (p. 8). In the realm of pre-service teacher education, informal surveys of pre-service French-as-a-second-language teachers at the University of Windsor, Faculty of Education found that three quarters of the respondents were not confident that their French skills were sufficient for teaching in the classroom (Flewelling, 1995). Pre-service French

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<sup>1</sup> In the French immersion program, several, and sometimes all, content-area subjects are taught in French in addition to the teaching of French language. In the French Core program, French is taught 80 minutes per week while other content-area subjects are taught in English.

immersion teachers at the University of Western Ontario were also unsure that their French language proficiency level was adequate for teaching in French immersion (Majhanovich & Gray, 1992). Similarly, pre-service teachers in Ontario reported that they lacked confidence in the adequacy of their level of French proficiency for teaching in French immersion although they were enrolled in a French immersion pre-service teacher education program (Flewelling, 1995).

In order to address these concerns, many universities across Canada have developed their own French language competence tests for pre-service French immersion teachers. The two British Columbia universities, the University of British Columbia (U.B.C.) and Simon Fraser University (S.F.U.), which have specialized French immersion streams in their pre-service teacher education programs, limit enrolment in the French immersion stream to people who have met all general program pre-requisites and who have also passed a French language competence test. These universities administer a written and oral pre-admission French competency test, entitled the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* (Bournot-Trites, Obadia, Roy, Desquins, & Safty, 1989).

At U.B.C. and S.F.U., the pass levels on the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* for the elementary and secondary levels were set by the authors of the test. This was done by observing the minimum level required in French immersion classrooms and adjusted based on the level required to successfully complete a practicum in a French immersion classroom. Test administrators state they have received phone calls from school districts pressuring them to lower the pass levels in order to admit as many candidates as possible to the French immersion streams so that there would be a greater number of fully qualified French immersion teachers graduating from the universities. In 2001-2002 academic year, U.B.C. and S.F.U. produced a total of nineteen teachers specializing in French immersion, and thirty one in 2002-2003. Simon Fraser University's enrolment in the French immersion stream was capped in 2001 – 2002 but is not currently capped (Personal Communication, November 19, 2002, M. Bournot-Trites, 2002). According to Macfarlane and Hart (2002), universities cite low interest and a lack of applicants with adequate language skills as the reasons for the low number of graduates.

from the French immersion stream of teacher education programs. As Table 1 corresponds to the pass levels of the test, it would be a useful tool in engaging parents and school district personnel in a conversation on the expected level of French competence for French immersion teachers.

It is my assertion that there is no literature which describes whether school districts in British Columbia and parents are in agreement with the minimum levels of French language competence outlined in Table 1, and therefore whether or not parents and school districts are in agreement with the universities' French proficiency requirements.

Table 1

## Five Levels of French Competence

Level 1	Speech is halting. Vocabulary is basic, repetitive and error-laden. Makes many grammatical errors although some simple sentences are correct. Accent, pronunciation and intonation are poor.	Failure
Level 2	Speech is generally hesitant. Able to get message across with repetition and rephrasing. Grammar is generally correct but makes some errors. Is able to hold basic conversations but cannot discuss topics requiring specialized vocabulary. Errors in pronunciation and accent do not interfere with comprehension.	Admission to French Core elementary only
Level 3	Able to discuss some topics fluently but is often left searching for words. Cannot use complex sentence constructions and level of vocabulary limits the amount of precise information conveyed. Pronunciation is clear though not native-like. While many topics can be discussed, the level of language is not always appropriate to the audience or situation.	Admission to French Core Secondary or lower
Level 4	Speech is generally fluent with occasional hesitations. Makes few written and spoken errors. Makes few pronunciation errors. Vocabulary is sufficient to discuss most topics. The level of language is usually appropriate to the audience.	Admission to French Immersion Elementary or lower
Level 5	Speech and writing are fluent, free of grammatical errors and equivalent to that of a native speaker. Vocabulary is broad and level of language is always appropriate to the audience.	Admission to any stream including French immersion Secondary

## 2.2 *A Pan-Canadian perspective on French language proficiency and the French immersion teacher*

How useful is the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* compared to similar tests across Canada? Universities across Canada have developed their own pre- and post-admission French language competency tests for French immersion and French core teacher education programs. In an unpublished study which I conducted prior to this one, I

gathered information regarding the pre-admission French proficiency tests of five Canadian French immersion teacher pre-service programs (see Appendix E). I obtained information through university websites, published articles and telephone conversations.

Bayliss and Vignola (Bayliss & Vignola, 2000), who note that little has been published regarding pre-admission French proficiency tests for teacher education programs, wrote an article describing the University of Ottawa's Second Language Institute's French proficiency test. One aspect of this test that differs from *the Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* is that there is only one pass level:

Some candidates who failed the test expressed the opinion that they only wanted to teach Core French and felt that standards were too high ... The University of Ottawa's stand on this issue is that a certificate cannot specify a particular FSL context (ex. Core French), therefore this is not a distinction which holds up in practice where both Core French teachers and French immersion teachers merely represent two sub-groups of a larger groups labeled FSL teachers. It is also likely that Core French presents a mode of entry for new teachers who, once having gained admittance, can direct themselves towards a position in French immersion (Bayliss & Vignola, 2000, p. 238).

Bayliss and Vignola have called for the publication of more literature with regard to French proficiency tests currently in use at universities across Canada in order to facilitate an informed discussion on this issue.

The University of McGill also has only one pass level. According to a McGill test administrator there is little need to educate French Core teachers in Quebec, (Personal communication, L. Savoie, March 24, 2003). Students entering the McGill French as a Second Language stream are preparing to teach French immersion, French as a first language or enriched French.

At another Canadian university in Ontario, French immersion pre-service teacher candidates identify themselves as having a sufficient level of French to teach in French immersion. On the basis of this self-identification, candidates are admitted to the program. Those who are clearly unable to cope with the level of French required are then redirected into

the English stream of the program. This is the least rigorous screening procedure of the universities that were contacted.

Compared to the sample of tests administered at other Canadian universities, *the Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* appears to be an objective and useful test. Even within this small survey of Canadian universities, it is clear that a wide range of standards exists from candidate self-identification to rigorous tests of oral and written competence (see Appendix E).

### 2.3 *Teacher certification in British Columbia*

Once they have completed their teacher education program, prospective French immersion teachers must obtain a teaching certificate through the British Columbia College of Teachers. The British Columbia College of Teachers (B. C. C. T.), the body which issues British Columbia teaching certificates, has the opportunity to impose requirements with respect to the level of French language proficiency of French immersion teachers, but does not do so. This is the only level at which French immersion teachers could consistently be screened throughout the province since teachers are educated at different universities and will be hired by different districts, but must all have a B. C. C. T. teaching certificate or a letter of permission to teach. However, British Columbia teaching certificates do not bind teachers to or prevent them from teaching a particular program such as French immersion. And although the importance of an acceptable level of French competence is highlighted in policy documents, the absence of a test of French competence suggests that perhaps French language skills are less important than general teacher qualifications, or that the B. C. C. T. does not consider testing the level of French competence as part of its mandate even though it does require a test of English language proficiency for those who did not complete their post-secondary studies in English.

The by-laws of the B. C. C. T. explicitly define which qualifications are required to become a teacher in British Columbia. These by-laws listing requirements for both the generalist and



some specialists state that all teachers must have a set of general teaching skills and knowledge that include:

some general education ... a knowledge of learners ... some foundational understanding of how schools and education relate to the rest of society ... a pedagogical foundation which reflects a balance between teaching and learning as intellectual processes and teaching as skilled practice ... pedagogical knowledge and skills including the nature and organization of curriculum, communication skills, information processing skills, teaching/learning methodologies, and student assessment and evaluation strategies ... [and] the knowledge and skills for working with students, parents and other colleagues (British Columbia College of Teachers, 1995).

The above knowledge and set of skills are the basis for accredited teacher education programs in British Columbia. It is assumed that by completing such a program, a prospective teacher gains this knowledge and set of skills.

According to the B.C.C.T. by-law 2.A.01.1, the language proficiency requirements for a French immersion specialist are as follows:

- (b) a person who teaches in French immersion,
  - (i) must provide evidence of an acceptable score on both the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of Spoken English (Professional) (TSE-P), or provide evidence of an acceptable score on the English Language Assessment Test (ELAT)
    - (1) if the applicant completed her or his post-secondary education in countries other than Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland or the United Kingdom (effective January 1, 1995); or
    - (2) if the College has reason to believe the applicant is not proficient in the English language, and

must provide evidence acceptable to the College that her or his command of written and spoken French is satisfactory for the purposes of effectively carrying out the teaching function in British Columbia (British Columbia College of Teachers, 1995).

When comparing English and French language requirements for English stream and French stream teachers, it is useful to remember that English stream teachers teach up to 100% of the day in English and that French stream teachers teach up to 100% of the day in French. The B.C.C.T. specifies the English language proficiency tests both groups of teachers must pass. French immersion teachers do not need to pass a French language proficiency test to satisfy B.C.C.T. language requirements. No French competency test is named in the B.C.C.T. by-laws nor is one administered by this body. The B.C.C.T. leaves the responsibility of collecting evidence of a satisfactory command of written and spoken French mentioned in by-law 2.A.01.1 to the degree-granting institutions as a part of their professional autonomy. However, as demonstrated in Section 2.2, it was noted that French tests administered by pre-service teacher education programs in Canada vary significantly in rigour and length. Therefore, entrusting degree-granting institutions with the responsibility of verifying French proficiency does not guarantee that a universal minimum standard of French competence is being met. While the B.C.C.T. policy is a good one, the lack of enforcement in verifying French language skills seems problematic.

B.C.C.T. practices suggest that of these three qualifications, second language instruction education and the level of French language competence are the least important. General teaching skills and knowledge are tested at the university level through coursework and practica. However, the B.C.C.T. does not check whether French immersion teachers have second language instruction education or an acceptable level of French language competence before issuing teaching certificates.

#### 2.4 *The Fully qualified French immersion teacher*

French immersion teacher education programs have increased in number and often include a course in French immersion methodology. In order to implement certain methodological

approaches discussed in the literature (Flewelling, 1995; Swain, 1996), teachers need a minimum level of French competence. For example, teachers must be aware of grammatical rules in order to provide corrective feedback.

Methodology courses, in turn, may familiarize teachers with effective and ineffective ways of providing corrective feedback. Thus a certain level of French proficiency and familiarity with French immersion methodology complement each other and are likely to lead to a high quality of French language instruction in the immersion classroom.

For the purpose of my study, I have defined a fully qualified French immersion teacher as one who is able to demonstrate:

- full, general teacher qualifications;
- second language instruction education; and,
- an acceptable level of French language competence.

This definition is echoed in the literature (Day & Shapson, 1993; Macfarlane & Hart, 2002). Beyond formal qualifications, some personal qualities such as enthusiasm and a caring attitude are desirable as well.

## 2.5 *First language status*

Some studies have collected demographic information on the first language status of French immersion teachers. These studies corroborate the anecdotal evidence which suggests that there is a reversing trend in the number of francophones<sup>2</sup> and anglophones teaching in French immersion (see Table 2). The Obadia study sampled approximately 400 Canadian French immersion teachers (1984). Obadia noted that British Columbia had the highest percentage of anglophone French immersion teachers of all provinces: forty percent (40%). The

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this discussion, francophones are defined as persons who have learned French as their first language and have completed their formal education and have socialized predominantly in French. Anglophones are defined as persons who have learned English as their first language and have completed their formal education and have socialized predominantly in English. Heritage language learners are defined as those persons who have learned French at home as their first language but have completed their formal education and have socialized predominantly in English, or vice versa.

Day and Shapson study sampled approximately 2000 Canadian French immersion teachers (1996).

Table 2

First Language Status of Canadian French Immersion Teachers

	Francophone	Anglophone	Allophone	Bilingual
1984	73%	20%	5%	2%
1996	58%	34%	6%	3%

These two studies and anecdotal evidence from a pre-service teacher training program suggest that the number of anglophone French immersion teachers is rising, "We have seen the trend reverse in the number of francophones and anglophones enrolled in the French immersion teacher pre-service program at U.B.C. In 1984, the first year of French immersion program, there were only three anglophones and approximately twenty four francophones. Today, the situation is reversed. In 2002 - 2003, there are two francophones and twenty anglophones enrolled" (Personal Communication, M. Bournot-Trites, November 19, 2003)

While knowing the first language status of French immersion teachers is interesting, neither study explained why they collected this information. Some people may interpret first language status as an indicator of a teachers' level of French proficiency. They may assume that most anglophone teachers do not have the level of French competence needed, or conversely, that all respondents identifying themselves as francophones may have the level of French competence required. According to Dr. Monique Bournot-Trites, who oversees the administration

of the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC at U.B.C.*, some candidates who call themselves francophones do not pass the test at the French immersion level. Typically, these persons are heritage language learners who have grown up in a francophone family but have attended school and socialized predominantly in English (Personal Communication, M. Bournot-Trites, November 19, 2003). This suggests that a candidate's self-identification as a francophone may lead to wrong assumptions about that person's level of French language competence. Conversely, some anglophones may attain a near native level of French proficiency.

The discussion of the first language status of French immersion teachers and a weighing of the assumptions that may be associated with this information underscore the need to have an objective measure of French language competence in order to maintain acceptable standards of French language proficiency. This discussion also raises questions as to other advantages and disadvantages of first language status not associated with the level of French proficiency. Francophones might be better equipped to introduce French immersion students to francophone culture than anglophones. Do parents and hiring authorities consider the knowledge of French culture to be as important as French proficiency?

## 2.6 *Teacher supply and demand*

The existence of a teacher shortage has been used as an excuse to lower standards of teacher qualifications in the United States. General teacher shortages are currently reported in the United States, (Pipho, 1998), Australia (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001), New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Teachers in demand, 1998).

In the United States, 29,000 people are teaching with an undergraduate degree but without having undergone a university teacher education program; they hold what are known as emergency teaching credentials. Alternative certification, the process of giving those without full teacher qualifications permission to teach, is widespread in the United States (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001). A shortage of teachers is most often cited as the rationale for alternative certification. In Kentucky, some substitute teachers hold only a high school diploma

(Pipho, 1998). Programs such as Troops to Teachers (Department of Defense, 2001) and Teach for America (Teach for America, 2002) promote the alternative certification route. In spite of glowing endorsements from the programs' promoters (Hutchinson, 2001), many academics condemn alternative certification as misguided and harmful to children (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Lewis, 1998; Webb & Norton, 1999).

A recent study matched one hundred and nine pairs of certified and undercertified teachers in grades three through eight. The researchers compared the test scores in reading, mathematics and language of students placed with these two groups of teachers. They concluded,

that the advantage of having a certified teacher is worth about two months on a grade equivalent scale. The school year is 10 months long, so the loss from having an undercertified teacher is 20 percent of an academic year. In other words, students pay a 20 percent penalty in academic growth for each year of placement with undercertified teachers ... The hiring of undercertified teachers results in the hiring of unqualified teachers (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003).

Letters of permission from the B.C.C.T. may be considered a form of alternative certification in British Columbia. In the 2002 – 2003 school year, seventy two (72) teachers were teaching on letters of permission in British Columbia, two (2) of whom were teaching in French immersion, according to the Registrar of the B.C.C.T. (Personal communication, D. Smart, March 19, 2003). These small numbers suggest that British Columbia is not pursuing the path of alternative certification to any significant degree. For now, standards for general teacher qualifications remain uniform in the province and include course work and practica through an accredited teacher education program. However, we cannot predict what future political winds may blow our way and whether our standards for teacher certification will remain consistent. Through recent legislative changes to the British Columbia College of Teachers, the government has removed teachers' rights to govern themselves and has re-distributed this power by including non-teachers as the majority members on the governing board of the College (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2003). This suggests that the government intends to make changes in the

certification process although it is unclear how these changes will be manifested. Two salient features of the new legislation which may lead us toward alternative certification include;

- Chang[ing] representation on governing Council of the College of Teachers to 8 elected members and 12 appointed members. (Section 5 of the Teaching Profession Act).  
(Note: an interim board of 20 persons is to be appointed by the Minister).
- Remov[ing the] ability of the College to approve teacher education programs. College to only set standards for teacher certification. (Section 21(i) of the Teaching Profession Act) (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2003).

If British Columbia embarks upon a path of alternative certification, as have our American counterparts, it seems unlikely that a return to uniform standards would occur.

The general demand for teachers in Canada is expected to increase significantly in the coming years, (Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Macfarlane & Hart, 2002; Parker & Byfield, 2001; Shafer & Byfield, 2001). A general teacher shortage is predicted based on "[m]ore teachers reaching retirement age ... more students with special needs ... fewer graduates from teacher education ... lack of interest in teaching as a career ... high turnover of beginning teachers ... high turnover of experienced teachers who are leaving the profession but not retiring ... increased student enrolment" (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2000).

Across Canada, French immersion teacher shortages have been said to exist for many years (Macfarlane & Hart, 2002), (Day & Shapson, 1993; Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Hood, 1990; Macfarlane & Hart, 2002; Majhanovich, 1990; Obadia, 1989; Obadia & Martin, 1995; Ullman & Hainsworth, 1991).

In 1989, Obadia declared that a crisis in the French immersion teacher shortage had arrived in an article entitled, "La crise est arrivée: la croissance des programmes de français langue seconde et ses répercussions sur la qualité et le nombre des enseignants." Based on real and estimated numbers provided by provincial Ministers of Education and university Faculties of Education, he projected that 1,000,000 students would be enrolled in French immersion by 1999 in Canada, with a need for approximately 39,370 French immersion teachers. However, in 1999 -

2000, there were only 318, 244 students enrolled in French immersion in Canada (Canadian Parents for French, 2001), p. 40), less than a third of the projected number of enrolling students.

In light of projected numbers that, in hindsight, were inflated, and the ambiguity in the use of the term 'teacher shortage' (is it an absence of teachers, merely a smaller than desired pool of teachers, or the hiring of partially qualified teachers?), it is not surprising that some are skeptical of the discussion of teacher shortages and wonder if hidden motivations underlie these dire predictions. A provocative article published in the New York Times criticized the manner in which projections of teacher demand are calculated and argued that the pool of new teachers is greater than generally believed. Feistritzer concludes, "[T]o claim that there is a teacher shortage is simply wrong – there isn't one, and there won't be anytime soon. One has to wonder about the agenda of someone who's willing to claim otherwise" (Feistritzer, 1998). These criticisms of the discussion of a teacher shortage highlight a valid need to define what a teacher shortage is, to be wary of how projected shortages are calculated and to determine whether a teacher shortage exists currently, before entering the realm of future projections.

For the purpose of this study, a teacher shortage has been defined in terms of averages and illustrated on a scale to show degrees of severity. An average number of applicants per typical French immersion job opening in a given school district, in a given year is considered, in our case, the 2001-2002 academic year. I have defined a teacher shortage as a situation where there are one or fewer fully qualified applicants per job posting on average, as this suggests a barely sufficient supply of teachers and a lack of choice in applicants. Further, if a district has an average of only one fully qualified applicant per position, other positions may have had only partially qualified applicants or no applicants. Rather than viewing a teacher shortage as simply extant or non-extant, a spectrum describing degrees of shortage would be a useful tool in eliciting information from Directors of Human Resources to describe the current supply of French immersion teachers in British Columbia (see Table 3). The teacher shortage scale is based on the definition of a fully qualified French immersion teacher<sup>3</sup> as defined in Section 2.4.

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<sup>3</sup> A fully qualified French immersion teacher is able to demonstrate:



Table 3

## Teacher Supply Scale

No shortage    6+ fully qualified applicants  
                     4 - 5 fully qualified applicants  
                     2 - 3 fully qualified applicants

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Shortage        1 fully qualified applicant  
                     Applicants who satisfy two of three qualifications criteria  
                     Applicants who satisfy one of three qualifications criteria  
                     No applicants

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Note. Based on the estimated average number of applicants per typical job posting in a given year.

Links between French immersion teacher shortages and the lowering of standards have been made in two studies by Grimmert and Echols (Grimmett & Echols, 2000) and Macfarlane and Hart (Macfarlane & Hart, 2002). In a qualitative study of twelve school districts conducted by Grimmert and Echols, school district officials, local union presidents, teachers and administrators were interviewed on questions of teacher supply and demand and related concerns. The study found that there were shortages of specialists in a variety of subject areas including French, and that districts had had to "relax [hiring] criteria for specialty positions because they could not get enough people with the requisite academic qualifications and additional preparation (p. 334)." This study did not survey all school districts in British Columbia but a representative sample

- 
- full, general teacher qualifications;
  - second language instruction education; and,
  - An acceptable level of French language competence.

based on district size and location. It would be useful to survey a larger sample of districts in order to ascertain whether or not the results would be the same.

According to Macfarlane and Hart (2002), sixty seven percent (67%) of British Columbia school districts had "many fewer than needed" French immersion substitute teachers which constituted the province's greatest area of shortage in French immersion. Only one of nine school districts reported having "about the right number" of French immersion substitute teachers.

One third (33%) of school districts cited a fair level of difficulty in recruiting French immersion teachers with adequate language skills. Sixty seven percent (67%) of school districts reported having compromised "a little" on the minimum expected level of French language skills for French immersion teachers. What remains unknown, however, is what the original minimum standard of French competence school districts held before they compromised "a little." If the standards were very high, this compromise might not be serious. If the standards were already low, this compromise might be very serious. In a worst case scenario, in a school district where French competence may not be checked at all, it is conceivable that the degree of compromise is unacceptably high.

A recent article in the National Post (Brean, 2002) cited declining bilingualism among English-speaking teenagers according to newly released census figures. The article cited a Statscan analyst as saying, "Because young people in English-language provinces generally learn their French at school, their waning bilingualism might be due to a declining interest in French immersion programs at schools, or to the lack of qualified teachers these programs currently face." Enrolment in French immersion programs is, in fact, rising in British Columbia in spite of declining numbers in the overall student population (Canadian Parents for French, 2001). The second point, however, is an interesting statement. To what degree are qualified teachers lacking? And what is the impact of the shortage of qualified teachers in immersion?

With the Macfarlane and Hart study showing that school districts have already compromised "a little" and the national media citing these statistics, the French immersion scenario would benefit from a more accurate picture of what the actual standards of French competence are, how these standards are checked, what French immersion parents expect of

the program, whether parental expectations match the priorities of hiring authorities, whether parents find some compromise acceptable, and the extent of the French immersion teacher shortage. Furthermore, with evidence of a teacher shortage in French immersion already at hand, and the likelihood of a general teacher shortage in the future, it is probable that the French immersion teacher shortage will worsen.

Is the existence of a teacher shortage an acceptable reason to lower expected qualifications for French immersion teachers? If the French immersion teacher shortage worsens, will not the temptation to hire unqualified teachers increase? If an unqualified teacher is hired as a short-term solution to an urgent problem, his or her lack of qualifications may become a long-term problem if the school district is obligated to offer the teacher a long-term contract.

## 2.7 *Entry versus continuing standards*

In a national research study conducted for Canadian Parents for French, Macfarlane and Hart (2002) surveyed a sample of school districts in each province and territory. In British Columbia, ten school districts with French immersion programs were surveyed. According to their study, eighty-six percent (86%) of British Columbia school districts reported "new hires" as their primary source of French immersion teachers. At this point of entry, teacher selection decisions are generally made by the Director of Human Resources and, in larger districts, the human resources team. Although particular job titles may vary, I will henceforth refer to the person performing these duties as the Director of Human Resources. Once an applicant has gained access to the teacher-on-call list, the teacher is very likely to obtain permanent employment in the district (Grimmett & Echols, 2000). In other words, long-term recruitment decisions are often made when teachers are hired as teachers-on-call, and it is therefore at this point of entry where judgments on teacher qualifications must be made.

According to Macfarlane and Hart (2002), some degree of compromise has already occurred in the recruitment of French immersion teachers. An explanation for this may be that school district hiring authorities may make a distinction between entry standards and continuing standards. In other words, hiring authorities may have a lower set of standards for teachers at

the point of recruitment and expect that through in-service, they would improve their skills, and thus that continuing standards would be higher than entry standards.

There is no consensus on whether the level of French proficiency of immersion teachers improves or deteriorates while teaching. One might assume that a French immersion teacher could improve his or her French proficiency while teaching French since he or she is using French on a daily basis. Some academics argue the opposite, however, suggesting that teaching French may actually have a negative impact on the teacher's level of French, "Although one might think that by teaching French all day, teachers are able to maintain their skills, unfortunately this is usually not the case ... [T]hey are constantly exposed to mistakes made by students which can, in time, have a negative effect on the teachers' own skills" (Flewelling, 1995, p. 26). This underscores the need to verify a prospective French immersion teacher's level of French at the typical point of entry, being hired as a new teacher to the teacher-on-call list at the school district level. An investigation of the hiring process and of the responsibilities of the Director of Human Resources may shed light on how the testing of French proficiency fits into the overall recruitment process.

## 2.8 *Responsibilities of the Director of Human Resources*

"The selection process represents one of the quickest ways to initiate change and improvement in the services of a school organization. Every vacancy offers an opportunity to improve the quality and effectiveness of the organization's services." (Webb & Norton, 1999). If this statement is true, is its opposite also true? Is a poor selection the quickest way to diminish the quality of a school's services or program?

Public school districts in British Columbia must hire teachers with British Columbia teaching certificates or letters of permission. However, school districts have the professional autonomy to decide whether or not particular applicants are qualified for specific teaching assignments, including assignments in French immersion. Directors of Human Resources can accept or reject the universities' standards of French competence as measured by *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC*. After the universities and the B.C.C.T., the

school districts represent the last of three levels at which the French competence of French immersion teacher candidates can be checked before being hired to teach in a French immersion classroom. The permanence of recruitment decisions underscores their critical nature.

The complex process of selecting and hiring teachers is generally conducted by a Director of Human Resources and staff in larger districts; or by the Superintendent of Schools him or herself in the smaller school districts of British Columbia. According to Webb and Norton (1999), Human Resources Officers generally perform the following duties prior to hiring teachers:

- verify certification;
- verify qualifications;
- read official university transcripts;
- call references;
- perform background checks; and
- conduct pre-employment interviews.

Directors of Human Resources may look to course work as an indicator of French proficiency. However, course work alone may be a poor indicator of French language proficiency. According to one study, students having completed similar degrees in French had significantly different outcomes on a test of French proficiency (Bayliss & Vignola, 2000).

If Directors of Human Resources rely on test results cited in job applications, they would need to be familiar with the particularities of each test and its corresponding pass level in order to correctly interpret the results. With French immersion teacher candidates being hired from other provinces and countries, it is unlikely that any one Director of Human Resources could be familiar with French tests administered in all of these jurisdictions.

Although it would not be realistic to expect that Directors of Human Resources be familiar with all French competence tests for French immersion teachers administered across Canada, some Directors of Human Resources may be familiar with the pre-admission test administered by British Columbia French immersion teacher education programs, the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC*. The rubric in Table 1 would be a useful tool in determining whether or not Directors of Human Resources are in agreement with the pass levels set by the

universities. If they are not in agreement, it would be interesting to know whether school district standards are higher or lower than those set by the universities.

School districts might administer their own oral and written tests of French competence. A recent job posting for a French immersion teaching position retrieved on-line included the following, "The candidate must be completely fluent in French (written and oral): A written and oral test will be conducted to determine proficiency in French" (School District No. 60, 2003). Apart from anecdotal evidence such as the above job posting, to my knowledge, there is no literature documenting what measurement tools are used by British Columbia school districts to verify French language skills of French immersion teachers, and whether or not these tools, if extant, are reliable, valid and used consistently.

According to an article in *HR Focus* as cited in Webb and Norton (1999), an astonishing 50% of job applicants may have lied on their resumé or job application at one time or another. In light of such estimates, school districts would be irresponsible to rely on a candidate's self-report as an indicator of an acceptable level of French language proficiency. With the carrot of a permanent classroom placement dangling in front of the prospective French immersion teacher, one can easily imagine that a candidate would exaggerate or misrepresent her or his language abilities in order to secure a job.

Grimmett and Echols (Grimmett & Echols, 2000) cite several reasons why teachers may be teaching subjects they are not fully qualified to teach, "[r]espondents suggested that out-of-field teaching occurs because of legislated changes and curriculum compression, and sometimes because teachers presume they can teach subjects for which they are academically unqualified" (p. 334).

Fifteen years ago, Moeller predicted that the level of French proficiency would be defined more clearly over time. "It is highly predictable that as the gap closes between supply and demand of FSL teachers or as boards of education implement more stringent selection criteria, there will be a more clearly defined criterion of proficiency associated with various FSL teaching positions" (Moeller, 1988, p. 9). Yet, although some universities have established minimum

levels, there appears to be no uniform standard or practice amongst universities or amongst school districts.

Two recent studies (Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Macfarlane & Hart, 2002) have confirmed that some degree of French immersion teacher shortage exists and that a degree of compromise has occurred in some school districts. Is a time of shortage an appropriate time to discuss keeping standards high? Is this rather a time when boards would be more inclined to lower standards and compromise given the current French immersion teacher shortages? "It must be acknowledged from an administrative point of view, that setting a minimum standard [of French proficiency] could be a problem in areas of Canada that still have a paucity of adequately trained French teachers" (Moeller, 1988, p. 9).

Although recent studies have shown that some degree of compromise has already taken place in the recruitment of French immersion teachers, to my knowledge, the original expected level of French proficiency and the tools used by school districts to verify this level have not been documented. French immersion parents, who are primarily anglophones, may not have a level of French that allows them to make their own informed determinations on the level of French of their children's teachers. Inadequate French language skills of immersion teachers may therefore go unreported and unnoticed. Parents trust school districts to make appropriate decisions on French language proficiency. It would be interesting to know whether parents and school districts are in agreement on the minimum expected level of French proficiency for the immersion teacher. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know whether school districts use reliable and valid tools to verify French proficiency.

## 2.9 *Parental expectations*

Key players in the French immersion program are parents, without whose enthusiasm, enrolment figures would dwindle and the program would not continue to exist. The establishment of French immersion has not erased the debate over the quality of French-as-a-second-language instruction. In 1963, French immersion programs started in response to parental dissatisfaction with the level of French as a second language instruction in Quebec. Parents were instrumental

in the inception of French immersion (Rebuffot, 1993), and they continue to keep the program alive. Yet are parental expectations being met? In what order of importance do parents of French immersion students rank the French language skills of their child's teacher compared to general teaching skills and personal characteristics? As far as we know, no literature exists regarding the level of French language competence parents expect of French immersion teachers.

A Vector Poll surveyed 917 Canadian adults by telephone (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1999). The poll found that 80% of Canadians were opposed to lowering standards of teacher qualifications or of university admissions to teacher education programs even to address a future shortage of teachers. Does this survey reflect the views of French immersion parents as well?

#### 2.10 *Summary and conclusion*

There are three levels at which a British Columbia French immersion teacher's level of French proficiency could potentially be evaluated prior to obtaining employment: first, at the university level where a comprehensive test is in place to screen pre-service teachers entering the French immersion stream; second, at the B.C.C.T. level where proof of French proficiency may or may not be required prior to obtaining a teaching certificate; and third, at the school district level where the tools used to verify applicants' French proficiency may or may not be documented. As outlined in Section 2.1, the low numbers of graduates from the French immersion stream of British Columbia pre-service teacher education programs cannot fill all of the new French immersion openings that arise each year due to factors such as retirements, leaves and career changes. Therefore, school districts must either hire education graduates trained in British Columbia but without French immersion specialization, or they must hire teachers from elsewhere to teach in French immersion. If the teachers have been trained in British Columbia but have not specialized in French immersion, they may or may not have the same level of French as is required by the French immersion pre-service education programs. If school districts hire teachers from other provinces or countries, the level of French is also unknown.



Thus, if all job applicants have not passed the *Test de Compétence Communicative de UBC et de SFU*, the tool used by British Columbia French immersion teacher pre-service education programs, then the school districts must use other means to verify the applicants' level of French. To my knowledge, the tools used by school districts in British Columbia to verify the French proficiency of immersion teachers have not been documented in the literature.

Academics have long expressed concern about the French immersion teachers' level of French, and some have called for the establishment of a national French test to set a universal minimum standard of French competence. What remains unclear is whether or not they are justified in their concern. Does the system of teacher education, certification and recruitment have gaps and inconsistencies in its policies and practice of verifying French competence, or is the French competence of immersion teachers checked in a reliable and objective manner prior to recruitment?

The B.C.C.T. policy of verifying English language skills and strong teaching skills (as documented through the passing of university courses and practica) but the absence of verification of French language skills suggests that French language skills may be less important than general teaching skills in the eyes of this institution. What is the relative importance of French language skills compared to the other skills and attributes of a French immersion teacher? Are teaching skills more important than French language skills as suggested by B.C.C.T. policy? Is it acceptable to hire someone who is proficient in French but with less than satisfactory teaching skills or vice versa?

A teacher shortage in French immersion has been documented by recent studies. However, in this chapter, I have re-defined a teacher shortage based on numerical averages. This definition would be useful in gathering precise information on what proportion of British Columbia school districts are facing a shortage of French immersion teachers. The same study which documented a French immersion teacher shortage also found that school districts are accepting some degree of compromise when hiring French immersion teachers. Does the existence of a teacher shortage in a particular school district increase their willingness to lower

standards of French competence or to hire teachers without an educational background in second language methodology?

Key stakeholders in the French immersion program are parents, who keep the program alive by enrolling their children, and Directors of Human Resources, who recruit French immersion teachers. Do they share the same priorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers? Does one group have unrealistically high expectations of the level of French proficiency of French immersion teachers? Is either group willing to lower standards in the face of a teacher shortage? Although there are many other stakeholders and decision-makers in French immersion including students, the government and the British Columbia College of Teachers, this study will focus on comparing the priorities of two stakeholder groups, parents and Directors of Human Resources, to see if these priorities match. These issues have led to the following research questions.

- 1a. What are the most sought-after characteristics for a French immersion teacher according to Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia?
- 1b. What are the most sought-after characteristics for a French immersion teacher according to parents in British Columbia?
- 2a. Which is of greater importance to Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?
- 2b. Which is of greater importance to parents in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?
3. How severe is the British Columbia teacher shortage in French immersion according to Directors of Human Resources?
- 4a. In what ways, if any, would Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia be willing to modify their expectations of French immersion program recruitment practices during a shortage of French immersion teachers?

- 4b. In what ways, if any, would parents in British Columbia be willing to modify their expectations of French immersion program recruitment practices during a shortage of French immersion teachers?
5. What means do Directors of Human Resources employ to screen the French language skills of prospective French immersion teachers in British Columbia?
6. Is there a match or a mismatch between parental views and the views of British Columbia school district Directors of Human Resources on priorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers?

### Chapter 3: Research Method

#### 3.1 Participants

##### 3.1.1 Geographical areas

I mailed surveys to every British Columbia school district which had a French immersion program. On the survey, participants were asked to indicate whether their district was 'metro,' 'urban' or 'rural.' However, given that these terms were not defined numerically or in a glossary, and considering the possibility that the distinction between 'metro' and 'urban' may have therefore been ambiguous to some participants, 'metro' and 'urban' districts were grouped under the heading of 'urban' in the results.

##### 3.1.2 Directors of Human Resources

Two groups of participants were selected for the present study. The first group of participants are persons in charge of hiring teachers, including French immersion teachers, at the school district level. In small school districts, it is sometimes the Superintendent of Schools who hires teachers to the district. Other titles for persons carrying out this responsibility include Human Resources Officer or Director of Human Resources. A person performing the job of hiring or of overseeing the hiring of French immersion teachers at the district level will be henceforth referred to as a *Director of Human Resources*.

In order to obtain the names, titles and addresses of Directors of Human Resources, and to find out whether or not each district had a French immersion program, I telephoned each school board office in British Columbia. The Directors of Human Resources in school districts offering French immersion programs each became prospective participants in our study and were each mailed a questionnaire, a letter of explanation, a letter of consent, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

### 3.1.3 Parents

The second group of participants in this study were parents of French immersion students in British Columbia. In order to protect the anonymity of participants and to get a broad geographical representation, the surveys were sent out by Canadian Parents for French. The participants' affiliation with Canadian Parents for French may mean that these parents are among the strongest and most vocal supporters of French immersion. One might therefore question whether or not it was appropriate to survey this group of parents as their support of the program may be stronger than that of other French immersion parents. However, the present study did not ask the participants to rate the quality of the program or to state their level of satisfaction with the program. Instead, participants were asked to rank priorities and indicate their expectations with regard to hiring practices for this program. Therefore, although this group may not be representative of other French immersion parents in every way because they are particularly vocal in their support of the program, I do not believe their responses and priorities as pertaining to the questions posed in this study would differ from those of other French immersion parents. Logistically, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain the names and addresses of French immersion parents from across the province from individual school districts or another source.

Forty six (46) surveys were sent to Canadian Parents for French Chapter Representatives, forty four (44) were sent to delegates at the recent Canadian Parents for French convention, and ten (10) were sent randomly to other members of Canadian Parents for French to ensure regional balance. A total of 100 surveys were sent to French immersion parents in British Columbia. Each parent was mailed a questionnaire, a letter of explanation, a letter of consent, and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

### **3.2 Procedures**

#### **3.2.1 Questionnaire**

Directors of Human Resources and French immersion parents were mailed an envelope containing an explanation of the study (Appendix A), a file copy of the letter of consent (Appendix B), a copy of the letter of consent to be returned, the survey (see Appendices C and D) and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

On September 20<sup>th</sup> 2002, the survey was mailed out to each Director of Human Resources in a French immersion school district for the first time. On January 2, 2003, a second survey was sent to each Director of Human Resources. The parent surveys were mailed out on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002 by the Canadian Parents for French.

#### **3.2.2 Response rates**

In total, 28 out of 44 surveys that were mailed out to British Columbia school district Directors of Human Resources were returned, for a response rate of sixty-four percent (64%). Of the 100 surveys that were mailed to parents, 48 were returned (48%).

#### **3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews**

Among the Directors of Human Resources who responded to the questionnaire, thirteen (13) respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in a further 10 – 15 minute interview. Four (4) Directors of Human Resources were interviewed by telephone or in person. I attempted to contact all thirteen respondents who indicated that they were willing to be interviewed. I was able to contact only four of these respondents

Among the parents who responded to the questionnaire, seventeen (17) respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in a further 10 – 15 minute interview. However, I was able to obtain interviews with only three (3) of them were interviewed by telephone. Due to constraints of time and money, I was limited to calling respondents during Spring Break which may explain the low response rate for the interviews.

The interview questions were entirely based on responses to the questionnaire. Further clarification and explanations of the survey responses were sought during the interviews. No new topics were broached during the interviews. However, respondents sometimes offered comments beyond what was elicited.

All respondents who indicated on the survey that they would be willing to be contacted for an interview were called in March, 2003.

### 3.3 *Measures*

#### 3.3.1 **Description of questions**

In the survey sent out to Directors of Human Resources, we used three (3) yes or no questions, five (5) multiple choice questions, nine (9) seven-point scale questions, one (1) ranking question, and two (2) open-ended questions. The full questionnaire may be found in Appendix C.

The same questionnaire was sent to French immersion parents except for the omission of Section E which could only be answered by directors of human resources. In the survey sent out to parents, we used one (1) yes or no question, three (3) multiple choice questions, nine (9) seven-point Likert scale questions, one (1) ranking question, and one (1) open-ended question (See Appendix D).

Section A elicited demographic information from the respondents. Section B asked respondents to rate the desirability of prospective French immersion teacher candidates according to their first language status, training, and, for francophones, place of origin. Respondents were also asked whether or not it was acceptable to lower standards in the event of a teacher shortage. Section C asked respondents to rank nine skills and attributes in order of importance for prospective French immersion teacher candidates. The skills and attributes include language skills, teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of francophone culture. Section D asked respondents to identify the minimum level of French language competence they expect for French immersion teachers by choosing one of five descriptors. Section E, included in the Directors of Human Resources survey only, elicited information on the supply of French stream and English stream teachers in the school district. This section also asked respondents to

describe how French language competence is measured in the school district. Section F, included in both parents' and Directors of Human Resources' surveys, allowed respondents to write any further comments regarding priorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers in British Columbia.

### **3.3.2 Research questions and the questionnaire**

Table 4 shows how each of the questions on the questionnaire relates to the research questions.



Table 4

## Correspondence of Research Questions to Questionnaire

Research Questions	Corresponding Survey Questions
1. What are the most sought-after qualities for a French immersion teacher according to Directors of Human Resources and parents in British Columbia?	Section B, questions 1 – 6 Section C Section D
2. Which is of greater importance to Directors of Human Resources and parents in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?	Section C
3. In what ways, if any, are Directors of Human Resources and parents in British Columbia willing to modify their expectations of the French immersion program recruitment practices given the current shortage of French immersion teachers?	Section B, questions 7 – 9
4. What means to Directors of Human Resources employ to screen the French language skills of prospective French immersion teachers in British Columbia?	Section E, questions 3 – 4
5. What means to Directors of Human Resources employ to screen the French language skills of prospective French immersion teachers in British Columbia?	Section E, questions 1 – 2
6. Is there a match or a mismatch between parental views and the views of British Columbia school district Directors of Human Resources on priorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers?	Section B; Section C; Section D

### 3.3.3 Interview questions and the questionnaire

Candidates willing to be interviewed were asked some or all of the following questions which were based on trends in the data. If their answers matched the trend in the data, the following questions were asked. Occasionally, if their response was opposite to the trend in the data, further information was also elicited. All of the interview questions were based on table 5. However, respondents sometimes offered further comments beyond what was elicited.

Table 5

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Trend in data	Clarifying question
Parental preference for bilingual francophones over bilingual anglophones as French immersion teachers	Could you offer insights as to why bilingual francophones would be preferred as French immersion teachers?
Preference for French immersion teacher candidates from Quebec over ones from France	Could you offer insights as to why teacher candidates from Quebec would be preferred over ones from France?
Mixed response in desirability of hiring graduates of French Core stream of university pre-service programs	Are you familiar with the French proficiency test administered by British Columbia teacher training programs? If yes, do you think the pass levels are too high?
Favourable response toward requiring French immersion teachers to complete extra course work if standards are lowered	What kind of courses should they be required to take? How do you see this being implemented?
Supply of French immersion teachers	Do you consider your school district to be experiencing a French immersion teacher shortage? (to see if their judgment corresponded to the definition presented in chapter two)

### 3.4 *Coding*

#### 3.4.1 Questionnaire

Numerical values were assigned to most questions. For yes or no questions, 'yes' responses were assigned a value of one (1), and 'no' responses were assigned a value of zero (0).

Multiple choice questions were coded according to the number of possible responses. Question A3 had three possible responses. The responses were assigned a value of one (1), two (2) or three (3). For the two questions A2 and D, which had five possible responses, a value of one (1) to five (5) was assigned. Responses to questions with seven possible responses were assigned values from 'strongly disagree,' one (1) to 'strongly agree,' seven (7). All seven-point scale questions, except E1 and E2, had a neutral mid-point with a value of four (4). In questions B1 – B6 and B9, a response of 'strongly agree' was assigned a value of seven (7) and a response of 'strongly disagree' was assigned a value of one (1). The numerical assignments for B7 and B8 were inverted with 'strongly agree' having an assigned value of one (1), and 'strongly disagree' having an assigned value of seven (7) because the questions were negatively worded. In E1 and E2, specific descriptors were included on the scale to describe teacher supply. The greatest supply was assigned a value of seven (7), and the greatest shortage was assigned a value of one (1).

In the ranking question, C, respondents were asked to rank skills and qualities in order of importance with one (1) being the most important and nine (9) being the least important. For the ranking question, the assigned values were the reverse of the rankings so that the most important attribute became (9) and the least important, one (1), in order to increase clarity in discussing these numbers.

In the open-ended question E3, an exhaustive bank was made of all reported methods used to check the level of French competence of French immersion teacher candidates described by the respondents. For each method, a one (1) was assigned if the method was used in that

school district and a zero (0) was assigned if the method was not listed. The anecdotal responses to open-ended question F were typed out in full.

The coding of the parent questionnaire was identical to the coding of the Director of Human Resources survey because the questionnaires themselves were identical except for the omission of questions E1, E2, E3 and E4 from the parent questionnaire as these questions were applicable only to Directors of Human Resources. Questions E1, E2, E3 and E4 elicited school district statistics on the supply of teachers and a description of the methods used to screen language competence.

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

When contacted by telephone for the interview, respondents were asked if they would be willing to be tape recorded to facilitate note-taking. In face-to-face interviews, notes were handwritten without recording.

Because questions were entirely based on trends found in the data, responses were categorized according to their relevance to each research question. Questions sought to elicit further clarification of responses to survey questions.

### **3.5 Analysis**

All coded data were entered into an Excel file and transferred to SPSS for analysis. First, descriptive statistics for responses to all questions (except for open-ended questions) from all respondents were calculated including: the mean, standard deviation, the range and the percentage of respondents selecting each response.

Means were compared across groups using paired t-tests.

Quotations from open-ended comments on the survey and interviews were organized by their relevance to each research question. Quotations could sometimes be further categorized by sub-topic within the question. For example, quotations addressing the question of French immersion teacher supply were grouped into two preliminary categories: quotations from

respondents in districts citing a French immersion teacher shortage, and quotations from respondents in districts citing an adequate supply of French immersion teachers.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present demographic information about the respondents, and then summarize and discuss the responses from the questionnaires and the interviews in the order of the research questions.

### 4.1 *Respondent Demographics*

In this section, I will present and discuss the response rates, the degree of French language proficiency of respondents, the urban or rural distribution of respondents and the percentage of respondents having currently or formerly enrolled their children in French immersion.

#### 4.1.1 **Response rates**

Twenty eight of forty four school districts returned the surveys for a response rate of sixty four percent (64%). Forty eight of one hundred parents returned the surveys for a response rate of forty eight percent (48%).

Most respondents in both groups described their level of French as beginner or semi-fluent. On a five-point scale, Directors of Human Resources indicated a slightly higher level of French competence ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = .452$ ) than did parents ( $M = 1.63$ ,  $SD = .951$ ). (See Figure 1).

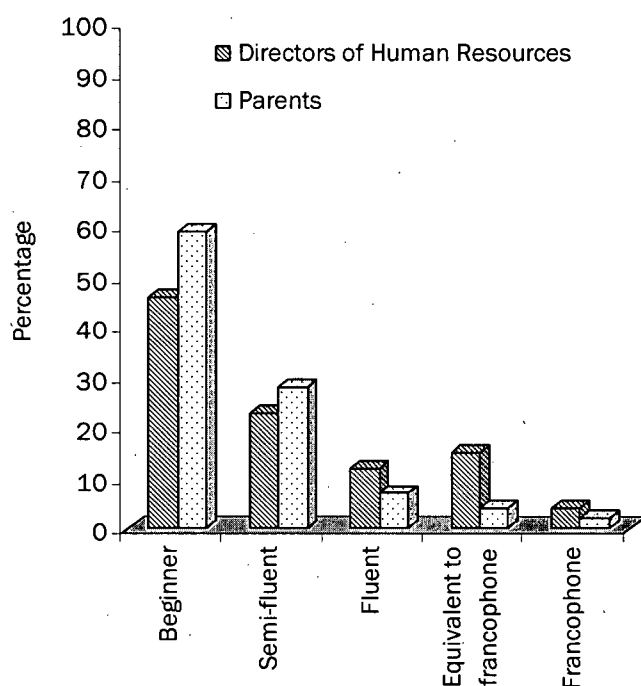


Figure 1. Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' level of French competence based on a five point scale

As discussed in Section 3.1.1., urban and metro school districts were grouped together as 'urban.' Sixty four percent (64%) of Directors of Human Resources surveys and sixty nine percent (69%) of parent surveys were returned by urban districts. Thirty six percent (36%) of Directors of Human Resources surveys and thirty one percent (31%) of parent surveys were returned by rural districts.

Twenty seven percent (27%) of Directors of Human Resources had currently or formerly enrolled their children in French immersion.

#### 4.1.2 Discussion

One explanation for the lower response rate from the parent group may be that they were mailed the survey only once, and the survey was mailed at Christmas which may have been a particularly busy time. Two mail-outs were done for the Director of Human Resources group.

Surveys were received from all geographical areas of the province (the North, Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, the Interior, etc.) showing a broad geographical representation of the province.

#### 4.2 *Research question 1*

*What are the most sought-after characteristics for a French immersion teacher according to Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia?*

*What are the most sought-after characteristics for a French immersion teacher according to parents in British Columbia?*

In this section, I will discuss the desirability of hiring French immersion teacher candidates according to their first language status, formal qualifications and level of French proficiency, and for francophones, place of origin. I will then compare the preferences and priorities of parents and Directors of Human Resources. For each characteristic, I will first summarize the results and then discuss the findings.

In this section and in section 4.5, responses were given on a seven point scale, and have been calculated in three ways. In the first method, the mean scores and standard deviation were calculated. In the second method, the percentage of respondents who selected each of the seven points is given. In the third method, a method which I invented and have called the Collapsing Method, I have collapsed the upper end of the spectrum (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree) to calculate the percentage of respondents expressing a degree of agreement with the statement, and have called this Upper End Collapsing. I have also collapsed the lower end of the spectrum (strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree) to calculate the percentage of respondents expressing a degree of disagreement with the statement, and have called this Lower End Collapsing. Neutral responses have always been calculated separately even when Upper End Collapsing and Lower End Collapsing percentages have been calculated (see Table 6).



Table 6

## The Collapsing Method

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Agree somewhat	Neutral	Disagree somewhat	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Upper End Collapsing Percentage				Lower End Collapsing Percentage		

**4.2.1 First language status**

The two demographic snapshots of French immersion teachers and anecdotal evidence cited in chapter two, suggest a reversing trend in the first language status of French immersion teachers since the program was first established. Whereas the number of francophone teachers used to be greater, the number of anglophone French immersion teachers appears to be increasing. Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed with the assertion that bilingual francophones were more desirable French immersion teacher candidates than bilingual anglophones.

**4.2.1.1 Results of survey**

When asked if bilingual francophones were more desirable French immersion teacher candidates than bilingual anglophones, a majority of respondents in both groups agreed with this statement. On a seven point scale, parents tended be more in agreement with this statement ( $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) than were Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) although the groups were not homogeneous in their responses. Using the Collapsing Method, seventy four percent (74%) of parents and fifty nine percent (59%) of Directors of Human Resources agreed that bilingual francophones were more desirable than bilingual anglophones. Six percent (6%) of parents and nineteen percent (19%) of Directors of Human Resources were neutral. Twenty percent (20%) of parents and twenty two percent (22%) of Directors of Human Resources expressed a degree of disagreement with this assertion (see Figure 2).

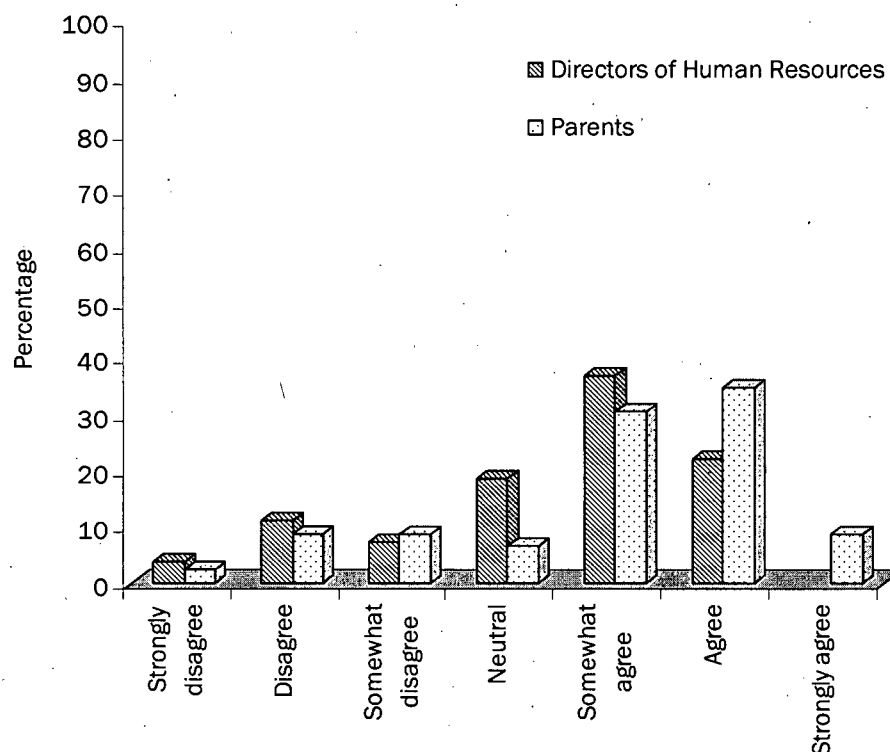


Figure 2. Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' degrees of agreement on a seven point scale with the assertion that bilingual francophones are more desirable French immersion teacher candidates than bilingual anglophones.

#### 4.2.1.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments

In the semi-structured interviews, respondents who indicated on the survey that they preferred francophone teachers had difficulty articulating why they thought bilingual francophones were better French immersion teacher candidates than bilingual anglophones.

However, Parent 1 was able to articulate a concrete example, "Pronunciation. People are always complimenting my son on his impeccable pronunciation. That gives me great pride as a parent and makes him feel very confident ... I think it was the francophone teachers who were able to pick up on [correcting pronunciation]. I really have no problems with bilingual anglophones as well."

All of the survey questions alluded to bilingual anglophones and bilingual francophones. In order to limit the scope of the discussion, the issue of whether it was preferable to have unilingual or bilingual French immersion teachers was not broached. Although this issue was not raised, some parents questioned the necessity of having bilingual teachers (as both francophones and anglophones in the questionnaire were specified as being bilingual).

"I don't believe English is necessary after Grade 1. We can use a translator for parent-teacher conferences if necessary," wrote Parent 6.

"A French immersion teacher doesn't have to be bilingual as long as he or she is francophone; it could be difficult in the beginning, but the students would adjust quickly. This way communicating in French is not an option anymore, it is a must," wrote Parent 36.

And again, although the issue was not raised by the interviewer in the telephone interview, a parent offered this comment on the need for English language proficiency, "Some of the teachers need to have a certain level of proficiency in English. If you've got a teacher who speaks great French but can't clarify for younger students or late immersion students clearly in English then it creates a conflict," said Parent 25.

#### **4.2.2 Bilingual francophones by place of origin and bilingual anglophones**

The results of the survey pertaining to ratings of bilingual francophones by place of origin, bilingual anglophones and teachers with varying educational backgrounds as French immersion teacher candidates are summarized in Figures 3 and 4, and Tables 7 and 8. These Figures and Tables will be followed by an elaboration and discussion of these findings.

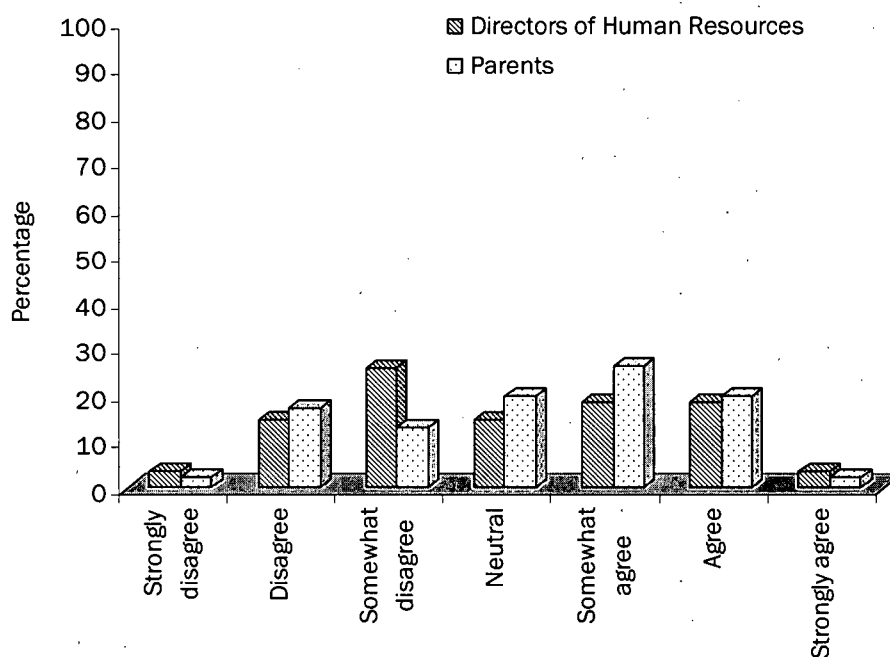


Figure 3. Desirability of hiring graduates from the French Core stream of a British Columbia teacher pre-service program on a seven point scale.

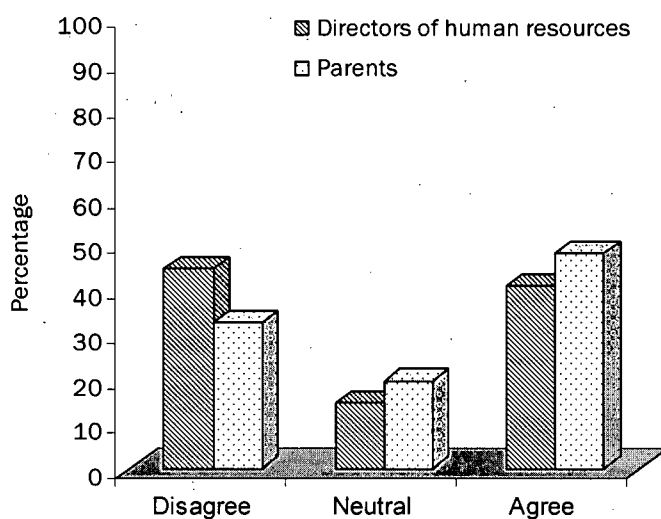


Figure 4. Desirability of hiring graduates from the French Core stream of a British Columbia teacher pre-service program using the Collapsing Method.

Table 7

Mean Ratings of French Immersion Teacher Candidates by First Language Status,  
Formal Education and for Bilingual Francophones, Place of Origin

Parents	Mean rating	Directors of Human Resources	Mean rating
Francophones from Quebec	6.24	Graduates from university pre-service French immersion program	6.19
Graduates from pre-service university French immersion program	5.87	Bilingual anglophones	6.11
Bilingual anglophones	5.72	Francophones from Quebec	5.7
Francophones from France	5.37	Francophones from France	4.89
Graduates from pre-service university French Core program	4.17	Graduates from university pre-service French Core program	4

Table 8

Ratings of French Immersion Teacher Candidates by First Language Status, Formal Education and for Francophones, Place of Origin, Using the Collapsing Method

	Upper End Collapsing Percentage		Neutral Percentage		Lower End Collapsing Percentage	
	Dir. of H.R.	Parents	Dir. of H.R.	Parents	Dir. of H.R.	Parents
... from Quebec	85%	91%	11%	9%	4%	0%
... from France	56%	74%	22%	13%	22%	13%
Bilingual anglophone	96%	87%	4%	11%	0%	2%
French immersion stream graduate	96%	89%	4%	9%	0%	2%
French Core stream graduate	41%	48%	15%	20%	44%	32%

#### 4.2.2.1 Results of survey

Respondents were asked in separate questions to rate the desirability of bilingual francophones from Quebec, bilingual francophones from France and bilingual anglophones as French immersion teacher candidates. Respondents could have rated all candidates as equally desirable or undesirable on the seven point scale provided for these questions. When comparing the responses to these questions, both groups rated bilingual francophones from Quebec as more desirable than bilingual francophones from France. On a seven point scale, parents rated bilingual francophones from Quebec ( $M = 6.24$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) more highly than did Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 5.7$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ). Using the Collapsing Method, ninety one percent (91%) of parents and eighty five percent (85%) of Directors of Human Resources agreed that teachers

from Quebec were desirable teacher candidates. Eleven percent (11%) of Directors of Human Resources and nine percent (9%) of parents were neutral. Four percent (4%) of Directors of Human Resources felt that francophones from Quebec were undesirable French immersion teacher candidates and none of the parents shared this view.

A majority of respondents in both groups felt that bilingual francophones from France were desirable French immersion teacher candidates. On a seven point scale, parents rated bilingual francophones from France ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) more highly than did Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 1.76$ ). Using the Collapsing Method, fifty six percent (56%) of Directors of Human Resources and seventy four percent (74%) of parents agreed that bilingual francophones from France were desirable French immersion teacher candidates. One fifth of Directors of Human Resources (22%) and thirteen percent (13%) of parents were neutral. Another one fifth (22%) of Directors of Human Resources felt that bilingual francophones from France were undesirable French immersion teacher candidates and thirteen percent (13%) of parents shared this view.

Directors of Human Resources rated bilingual anglophones more highly ( $M = 6.11$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) and homogeneously than did the parent group ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) on a seven point scale. However, both groups were overwhelmingly in agreement that bilingual anglophones were desirable French immersion teacher candidates. Using the Collapsing Method, ninety six percent (96%) of Directors of Human Resources and eighty seven percent of parents (87%) stated that bilingual anglophones were desirable French immersion teacher candidates. Four percent (4%) of Directors of Human Resources and eleven percent of parents (11%) were neutral. None of the Directors of Human Resources and only two percent (2%) of parents felt that bilingual anglophones were undesirable teacher candidates.

#### 4.2.2.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments

Because of the tendency to prefer French immersion candidates from Quebec over ones from France, a sample of respondents from both groups who expressed this preference were asked why they thought teacher candidates from Quebec were more desirable.

"My priority is to hire local from Canada. If there is a shortage, I have no problems hiring from overseas. Teachers from Canada know our curriculum. They know our culture," said Parent 25.

"There is a difference between the French spoken in France and French Canadian. That difference is confusing for students especially when many of the teachers they have are from Quebec or have learned the French Canadian. It's a dialect thing I suppose. When a student's trying to achieve, it's confusing if it doesn't sound right or look right," said Parent 40.

"Culturally, it's the same country so it's a bit easier. Also, retention. Sometimes, it's easier to retain teachers from Quebec. ... Their methods of teaching and strategies would be closer if they're from the same country. They don't have to be from Quebec. I would prefer to hire a teacher from Canada – anywhere in Canada where there are pockets of French: Alberta, New Brunswick – over a teacher from Europe. They are more likely to stay. Ideally, it is best to get teachers from B.C. They will stay," said Director of Human Resources 7.

"The disadvantage of hiring anyone from out of province, not just francophones, is the acculturation process. Labour relations and the teaching environment here are different - not better or worse, just different. Parents are more involved," said Director of Human Resources 30.

When questioned on why they rated French immersion teacher candidates from Quebec more highly than ones from France, Directors of Human Resources cited cultural reasons and teaching methods. First, teacher candidates from Quebec were said to be more familiar with British Columbia's culture thus perhaps increasing their level of comfort and reducing the number of misunderstandings. Some Directors of Human Resources specified that the familiarity with the culture would apply to any Canadian teacher candidate over one from Europe. Second, familiarity with teaching methods implies that what is taught in local teacher training programs



may better reflect what is considered in British Columbia schools to be 'best practice' over methods that may be taught elsewhere.

Overall, parents tended to rate bilingual francophone French immersion teacher candidates more highly than did Directors of Human Resources. Bilingual francophones from Quebec were ranked most highly using the Upward Collapsing Method and when comparing mean ratings. In follow-up interviews, the reasons given for this parental preference included: francophone teachers' perceived ability to correct pronunciation, francophone teachers' knowledge of French culture and superior linguistic abilities.

The hiring authorities who were interviewed said that teachers from British Columbia were easier to retain than teachers from other provinces. Directors of Human Resources highlighted the advantages of local teachers' familiarity with the British Columbia school system and culture. One respondent mentioned that French immersion parents in British Columbia may be more involved than parents from other provinces and programs, and that this could be a source of stress for teachers.

Parents preferred bilingual francophones as French immersion teacher candidates over bilingual anglophones, although they were willing to accept bilingual anglophone teachers as well.

#### **4.2.3 Formal qualifications**

##### **4.2.3.1 Results of survey**

Both groups were generally in agreement that a graduate from the French immersion stream of a university pre-service teacher education program was a desirable French immersion candidate. Using the Collapsing Method, ninety six percent (96%) of Directors of Human Resources and eighty nine percent (89%) of parents agreed with this statement. Four percent (4%) of Directors of Human Resources and nine percent (9%) of parents were neutral. None of the Directors of Human Resources and only two percent (2%) of parents thought graduates from the French immersion stream were undesirable French immersion teacher candidates. On a seven point scale, the Director of Human Resources group rated the desirability of hiring graduates from the French immersion stream of teacher pre-service education programs more

highly and responded more homogeneously ( $M = 6.19$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) than did the parent group ( $M = 5.87$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ).

There was no consensus within either group on the desirability of hiring a graduate from the French Core stream of a university pre-service teacher education program. On a seven point scale, Directors of Human Resources rated French Core stream graduates as slightly less desirable ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) than did parents ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ), (see Figure 3). Using the Collapsing Method, forty one percent (41%) of Directors of Human Resources and forty eight percent (48%) of parents felt that French Core stream graduates were desirable French immersion teacher candidates. Fifteen percent (15%) of Directors of Human Resources and twenty percent (20%) of parents were neutral. Forty four percent (44%) of Directors of Human Resources and thirty three percent (33%) of parents felt that French Core stream graduates were undesirable French immersion teacher candidates (see Figure 4). Both groups preferred graduates from the French immersion stream of the pre-service teacher education programs over graduates from the French Core stream.

#### **4.2.3.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments**

The sample of respondents who were interviewed said they were not familiar with the U.B.C. and S.F.U.'s test of French proficiency. However, the respondents' degree of familiarity with the test was not asked in the survey and the sample of respondents interviewed on this question was too small to represent the entire respondent group.

Other issues around formal qualifications were raised by parents and Directors of Human Resources.

"At my son's school there is a teacher from Quebec who found it very challenging to meet all the B.C. requirements, although she is fully qualified in Quebec," wrote Parent 37.

"Standardized teaching requirements across Canada would allow teachers to move freely between provinces," wrote Parent 32.

"We must be careful not to lower our standards too much in regards to quality teachers, simply in order to get a body in that classroom to teach the students. Yet, I'm sure there are

some requirements we could loosen up on to attract more out of province or out of country francophone teachers," wrote Parent 1.

"Let's have the College of Teachers be a bit more flexible in their requirements for full certification," wrote Director of Human Resources 2.

#### **4.2.4 Level of French proficiency**

Respondents were asked to indicate the minimum level of French language competence that they expect of a French immersion teacher on a five point scale which corresponds to pass and failure levels of the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* as described in Chapter Two (see Table 1).

##### **4.2.4.1 Results of survey**

When provided a rubric of levels of French language competence, both groups were in agreement that French immersion teachers should have a high level of French competence. Most respondents chose level four or five as the minimum acceptable level of French competence. Responses from both groups were similar and homogeneous. On this five point scale, the parent group had a slightly higher mean score ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .54$ ) than did the Directors of Human Resources group ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = .55$ ). Thirty seven percent (37%) of Directors of Human Resources and forty six percent (46%) of parents expect a minimum of a level 5 of French proficiency. Fifty nine percent (59%) of Directors of Human Resources and fifty two percent (52%) of parents expect a minimum of a level 4. Four percent (4%) of Directors of Human Resources and two percent (2%) of parents expect a minimum of a level 3. None of the respondents chose levels 1 or 2 as acceptable minimum levels of French proficiency (see Figure 5).

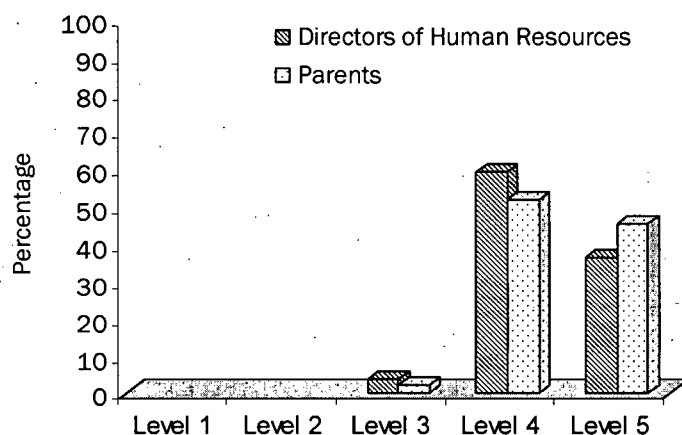


Figure 5. Minimum level of French competence of a French immersion teacher expected by parents and Directors of Human Resources based on a five point rubric.

#### 4.2.4.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments

"[M]y French came from anglophones (barely competent) whose pronunciation was poor. It's important that teachers be fluent. Otherwise it's frustrating for students," wrote Parent 16.

"The fact of excellent competency in English and French is a 'given,'" wrote Director of Human Resources 1.

Director of Human Resources 7 suggested that there should be no screening process for those who wish to teach French Core because it is a required part of the curriculum, thus all elementary teachers should be prepared for it, "All elementary pre-service teachers should have to take courses on how to teach French as a Second Language because they all have to teach it. I phone them, 'Could you teach FSL?' 'No.'"

#### 4.2.5 Summary of results for research question 1

Respondents were not asked to rank the desirability of hiring different French immersion teacher candidates, but rather to rate each candidate in separate questions. Respondents could therefore have given all candidates equal ratings on the seven-point scales provided. When comparing the mean ratings of French immersion teacher candidates by parents, they rated

francophones from Quebec most highly French immersion teacher candidates, followed by pre-service French immersion stream graduates, bilingual anglophones, francophones from France, and finally, pre-service French Core stream graduates. Directors of Human Resources rated pre-service French immersion stream graduates most highly, followed by bilingual anglophones, francophones from Quebec, francophones from France and finally, pre-service French Core stream graduates (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 8 and Figure 6 both compare the responses of parents and Directors of Human Resources on the desirability of hiring various French immersion teacher candidates. In Table 8, mean ratings are given. In Figure 6, the Upward Collapsing Method was used to calculate degrees of agreement with the desirability of hiring various French immersion teacher candidates. In this instance, the advantage of the Collapsing Method may be that it is very quick to interpret at a glance without requiring the reader to become as familiar with the seven-point scale used for the question. The Collapsing Method also gives us a general idea of the range of responses, although simplified into a three-point scale. The mean score and standard deviation are more specific than the Collapsing Method percentages, but require greater familiarity with the question and the scale used.

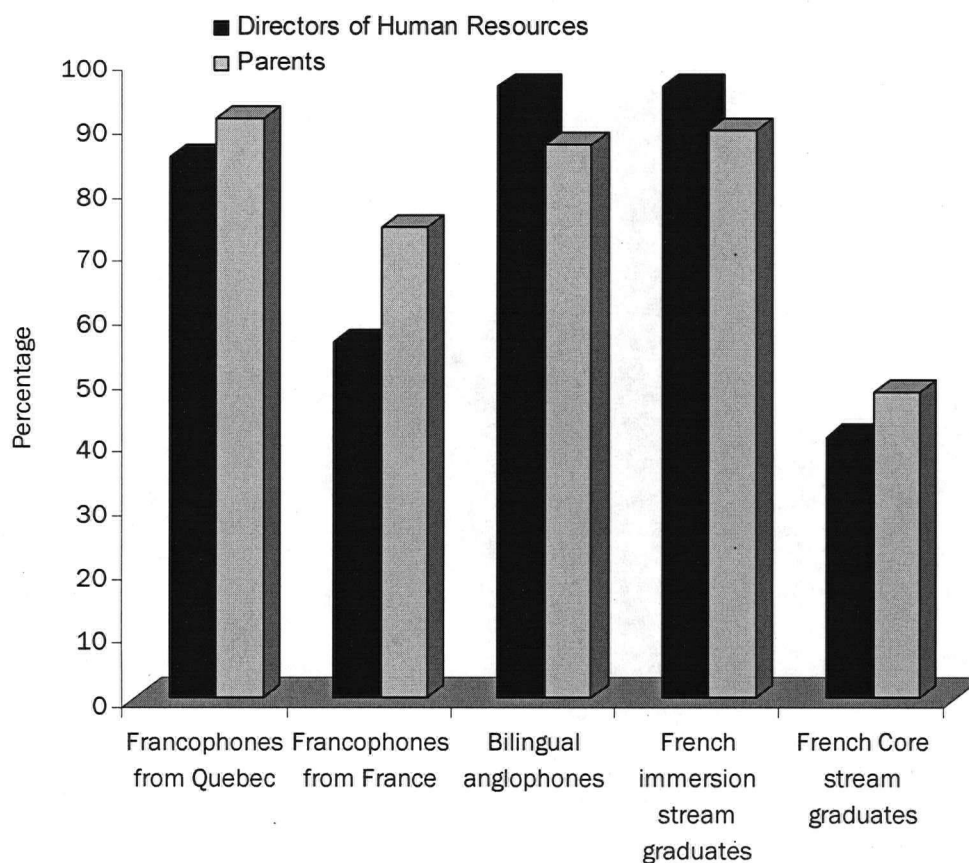


Figure 6. Using the Upward Collapsing Method, a comparison of the percentages of parents and Directors of Human Resources in agreement with the desirability of hiring French immersion teacher candidates by first language status, formal education and for francophones, place of origin.

Not surprisingly, Directors of Human Resources rated French immersion teacher candidates with full, formal qualifications most highly, namely university pre-service French immersion graduates. These graduates are anglophones or francophones with a level 4 or higher of French language proficiency and with an educational background in second language instruction methodology. Parents rated bilingual francophones from Quebec as most desirable

French immersion teacher candidates which reaffirms their overall tendency to prefer bilingual francophones over bilingual anglophones.

#### **4.2.6 Discussion of research question 1**

In the introductory anecdote of Chapter One, a parent complained to the school administrator that her child had not had a single francophone teacher in elementary school. Although this was only an isolated event, it is worth considering why her expectations did not match the services rendered by the school. There seems to be a reversing trend in the number of francophones and anglophones teaching in French immersion as outlined in Section 2.5 and Table 2. In particular, this parent seemed unhappy with the recruitment of anglophone teachers to teach in French immersion. The present study found that parents rate bilingual anglophone teachers as highly desirable French immersion teachers, but nonetheless prefer bilingual francophone teachers, particularly from Quebec.

Upon first glance of the survey results, Directors of Human Resources seem to prefer bilingual francophone French immersion teacher candidates over bilingual anglophones. When asked whether bilingual francophones were more desirable French immersion teacher candidates than bilingual anglophones, fifty-nine percent (59%) of Directors of Human Resources expressed some degree of agreement with this statement, using the Upward Collapsing Method. However, when comparing mean ratings of different French immersion teacher profiles, Directors of Human Resources rated bilingual francophone teachers highly, but gave bilingual anglophones a slightly higher rating overall.

When asked why bilingual anglophones might be preferable French immersion teacher candidates, issues of teacher retention, place of origin and familiarity with the local school system were emphasized. In follow-up interviews, Directors of Human Resources seemed to attribute little importance to the first language status of applicants and suggested that neither Quebec nor France was necessarily a preferred place of origin, emphasizing the advantage of hiring local teachers due to a higher rate of retention.

Given their preference for francophone French immersion teacher candidates, parents may be surprised by the high percentage of bilingual anglophone French immersion teachers currently teaching in French immersion, a growing trend described in Section 2.5.

Directors of Human Resources tended to prefer bilingual anglophone French immersion teacher candidates, not as much due to their first language status, but possibly due to their familiarity with local school culture and realistic expectations of parent involvement if local teachers. Parents may be unaware of the advantages of hiring local, bilingual anglophones for reasons of program stability, retention, familiarity with school culture, and, potentially, a greater readiness to deal with high levels of parental involvement.

There was no consensus on the desirability of hiring graduates of the pre-service French Core teacher education program. Interviewees lacked familiarity with the French competence test administered by U.B.C. and S.F.U. and the associated streaming process into French immersion and French Core teacher education programs. In fact, when asked about the desirability of hiring pre-service French immersion program graduates versus French Core stream graduates, some interviewees referred to K - 12 French immersion and K - 12 French Core program attendance rather than university level streaming, and seemed to attach little significance to the streaming process at the university teacher education program level.

The range of responses underscores the inconsistency of school district standards for evaluating the formal qualifications of French immersion teachers across British Columbia. While some Directors of Human Resources consider French Core stream graduates to be desirable French immersion teacher candidates, others are adamant that they are not.

The high degree of consensus on the expected level of French proficiency, and the lack of consensus on the desirability of French Core stream graduates suggests that respondents may not connect the pre-service teacher education streaming process with the levels of French competence measured by the pre-admission French proficiency test.

The parents' and Directors of Human Resources' responses lead me to conclude that both groups as well as the pre-service teacher education programs are in agreement on the minimum expected levels of French proficiency for a French immersion teacher. However, this



overwhelming agreement does not explain why graduates from the French Core stream are routinely hired into French immersion classrooms or why many respondents rated them as desirable French immersion teacher candidates given that they may not have this minimum level of French proficiency. A lack of familiarity with the test or disagreement on the pass level of the test may be two reasons why French Core teachers are hired into French immersion classrooms.

A single pass level for the French proficiency test may be desirable to give teachers more flexibility in their assignments (qualifying them to teach either in French immersion or French Core), to assure that French immersion teachers have the minimum required level of French proficiency (if potential confusion about pass levels is erased), and to give a common language to those taking and interpreting the test on the meaning of a 'pass.' However, setting a single pass level would raise a number of issues. Would the current French immersion pass level be lowered or would the French Core pass level be raised, or both? Furthermore, do French Core teachers need the same level of proficiency in French as French immersion teachers given the differences in their teaching assignments? Would the already-insufficient numbers of graduates from these streams diminish? Would the student teachers complete their practica in French immersion or French Core classrooms? Clearly, they would not be able to complete practica in all four settings: elementary and high school French Core and elementary and secondary French immersion classes. And finally, which methodology courses (French Core, French immersion or both?) would they be required to complete?

Parents and Directors of Human Resources overwhelmingly agreed that graduates of the French immersion stream of university teacher pre-service programs were highly desirable French immersion teacher candidates. The graduates of this stream fulfill the three criteria for a fully qualified French immersion teacher as outlined in Section 2.4: the teacher has very good teaching skills, a high level of French competence and has received instruction in second language methodology. The nineteen graduates from the French immersion stream of U.B.C. and S.F.U. pre-service teacher education programs in the 2001 - 2002 school year were therefore considered desirable French immersion teacher candidates. The small numbers of graduates from this stream, however, do not meet the demand for French immersion teachers in the entire

province. School districts must therefore recruit teachers with varying backgrounds and make their own assessment of each teacher's suitability for teaching in French immersion.

Directors of Human Resources' preference for bilingual anglophones over bilingual francophones may be attributable to issues of teacher retention. In follow-up interviews, bilingual anglophones were generally assumed to be local teachers whereas francophones were assumed to come from elsewhere. Local teachers were perceived to be less likely to leave mid-way through the school year. Teacher retention issues are particularly problematic if the teacher-on-call pool is insufficient. In such a case, there would be no teacher available to replace a teacher who may leave mid-year. This scenario is not new to French immersion. In a 1988 newspaper article entitled "Kids wasting year without French, parents charge", (Moloney, 1988) parents were upset when a school district was unable to find a replacement for a teacher who went on maternity leave mid-year. Director of Human Resources 13 cited a similar scenario which he was facing at the time of the interview, "I just got a letter from a French immersion teacher who said she would be leaving her full time position at the end of April. 'Sorry – I got a better offer.' It is very difficult to find anyone mid-year. Do I have anyone to replace her? No." According to this anecdote, the same problem exists fifteen years later.

Directors of Human Resources preference for bilingual anglophones may also be attributed to factors such as local teachers being familiar with local school culture and therefore facilitating communication with parents, local teachers possibly being easier to retain, the ability of bilingual anglophones to communicate easily with parents and administrators, and flexibility in being able to teach in the English and French streams.

There was the least consensus on the desirability of hiring teachers from the French Core stream to teach in French immersion. One explanation for this may be that French Core teachers from universities which use the *Test de Compétence Communicative de SFU et de UBC* have a minimum of a level 2 of French proficiency in the elementary stream and level 3 in the secondary stream. Some candidates may have narrowly missed the level 4 cut-off for admission into the French immersion stream although they have a high level of French proficiency. At U.B.C., after they have taken the test, all pre-service teachers spend the full year taking methodology courses

in French which may improve their level of French proficiency. On the other hand, others may begin the year having barely attained a level 2 score on the test. French Core teachers trained in other provinces, such as Quebec, may have extremely high levels of French proficiency. Therefore, many hiring authorities and parents may justifiably feel that some French Core graduates are desirable teacher candidates for French immersion.

One further explanation for the lack of consensus on the desirability of hiring French Core teachers to teach in French immersion is that some parents and hiring authorities may not be familiar with the streaming process that takes place at the university level, and are therefore unable to interpret the meaning of different designations. If this latter explanation is the reason for the lack of consensus, it would support the decision of test administrators at the University of Ottawa to offer only one level of FSL certification and only one pass level on their French proficiency test for both French Core and French immersion teachers, given that many French Core teachers will find themselves teaching in French immersion classrooms.

#### 4.3 *Research question 2*

*Which is of greater importance to Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?*

*Which is of greater importance to parents in British Columbia: a French immersion teacher's language skills or general teaching skills?*

In this section, respondents were forced to make choices amongst the following nine skills and qualities of French immersion teachers: fluency in French, pronunciation, spoken and written accuracy, enthusiasm, a caring attitude, repertoire of teaching skills, classroom management skills, education in second language methodology, and knowledge of francophone culture. Respondents were asked to rank these skills and qualities, and equivalences were not allowed.

Some respondents struggled with this forced choice as reflected in the following comments. Parent 9 wrote, "Although in Part C I ranked training in second language

methodology #6, I believe this is extremely important for an F.I. teacher. All of the items in Part C are important so it was difficult to rank them." Other parents echoed these sentiments, "All attributes listed are extremely important!" wrote Parent 34. Parent 41 wrote, "This was a tough survey to complete. I looked at it and set it aside several times. It is extremely hard to say whether a gifted teacher of lesser language skills is better or not than a teacher of impeccable language skills that turns students off because of poor teaching skills." These nine skills and qualities were grouped into four categories: language skills, teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of French culture.

#### 4.3.1 Results of survey

Mean rankings for each skill and quality were calculated first. Each skill or quality was ranked from nine (most important) to one (least important.)

Amongst the language skills, on a nine point scale, fluency was ranked as most important by both groups, followed by spoken and written accuracy and then pronunciation. Parents ( $M = 7.97$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) ranked fluency slightly more highly than did Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 7.77$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ). Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 6.61$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ) ranked spoken and written accuracy slightly more highly than did parents ( $M = 6.17$ ,  $SD = 2.18$ ). Parents ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ) ranked pronunciation slightly more highly than did Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ).

Amongst the teaching skills, Directors of Human Resources ranked the repertoire of teaching strategies as most important ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SD = 2.13$ ), followed by classroom management skills ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ) and second language methodology ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 2.63$ ). Amongst the teaching skills, parents ranked classroom management skills as most important ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 2.44$ ), followed by second language methodology ( $M = 5.24$ ,  $SD = 2.48$ ) and repertoire of teaching strategies ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 2.57$ ).

In the personal qualities category, parents ranked enthusiasm ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ) as slightly more important than a caring attitude ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 2.61$ ). Directors of Human

Resources ranked a caring attitude ( $M = 5.30$ ,  $SD = 2.72$ ) more highly than enthusiasm ( $M = 5.0$ ,  $SD = 2.60$ ).

On a nine point scale, knowledge of French culture was given the lowest ranking by both Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ) and parents ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ).

Mean rankings were then calculated for each category.

Table 9

Comparison of Mean Rankings of Four Sets of Skills and Attributes of the French Immersion Teacher by Parents and Directors of Human Resources on a Nine Point Scale

	Parents		Directors of Human Resources	
	Mean ranking	Standard deviation	Mean ranking	Standard deviation
Language skills	6.44	1.45	6.47	1.76
Teaching skills	5.18	1.72	5.80	1.53
Personal qualities	5.06	2.01	5.15	2.52
Knowledge of French culture	2.16	1.89	2.73	2.08

Because there was no significant difference between the two groups in their ranking of any of the categories, the responses of parents and Directors of Human Resources were grouped together (see Tables 9 and 10).

Table 10

Combined Mean Rankings of Four Sets of Skills and Attributes of the French Immersion Teacher on a Nine Point Scale

	Mean ranking	Standard deviation
Language skills	6.45	1.56
Teaching skills	5.41	1.67
Personal qualities	5.09	2.19
Knowledge of French culture	2.37	1.97

Paired t-tests were conducted to compare the four categories (language skills, teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of French culture) with the results of the two groups of respondents (parents and Directors of Human Resources) pooled. Results of the t-tests showed that language skills were ranked significantly higher than teaching skills ( $t(69) = 3.74$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed), personal qualities ( $t(69) = 3.78$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed) and knowledge of French culture ( $t(69) = 17.57$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed).

#### 4.3.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments

As stated earlier, respondents struggled with having to make forced choices and several stated that all listed skills and qualities were important. Most anecdotal comments relating to this question emphasized the importance of balance. In other words, to possess one of the sets of skills or qualities listed, but to lack the others, would be totally undesirable.

"[W]e have noticed fluency in French does not necessarily guarantee a successful immersion teacher. Methodology is at least as important as, if not more important than fluency. We have had francophone teachers from Quebec who had a tenuous grasp of French grammar and anglophones with excellent methodology but some difficulties with fluency. Those with second language methodology and reasonable fluency were most successful," wrote Director of Human Resources 28.

"Each teacher is an individual and I may be more lenient in hiring someone with less than perfect French if they were keen and enthusiastic and caring and willing to keep learning. Also at different levels of education, I might expect different qualifications from the teacher in question. Lastly, even if a teacher had wonderful French, but had zero personality, that teacher would score low... my personal opinion," wrote Parent 31.

Both parents and Directors of Human Resources agreed that the French language skills of a French immersion teacher are extremely important. When given a forced choice to rank nine skills and attributes, there was no significant difference between the responses of parents and Directors of Human Resources. All responses were therefore grouped together, and language skills (fluency, pronunciation, and spoken and written accuracy) were ranked significantly higher than teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of French culture.

#### **4.3.3 Discussion**

Academics have expressed concerns about the level of French of French immersion teachers in the literature (Day & Shapson, 1996; Flewelling, 1995; Frisson-Rickson & Rebuffot, 1986; Moeller, 1988; Obadia & Martin, 1995). Some studies have shown that student teachers themselves question their readiness to teach in French immersion (Flewelling, 1995; Majhanovich & Gray, 1992). Parents and Directors of Human Resources consider the level of French of immersion teachers to be a top priority, even more important than teaching skills and personal qualities. The first place ranking of French language skills among many skills and attributes suggests that the question of minimum standards of French proficiency and how French language skills are tested are issues of high importance and interest to the stakeholders in French

immersion. Any problems in this area will surely inflame debate if only at a school level.

Satisfaction with the level of French of French immersion teachers is sure to contribute to overall satisfaction with the program.

The present study found that a high level of French language competence in the French immersion teacher is a top priority for parents. Did the anglophone teachers in the elementary school of the opening anecdote of chapter one not have a level of French competence that met the expectations of this parent? Did this parent expect more instruction of French culture? Was she expecting more cultural immersion in addition to linguistic immersion? While the instruction of French culture is a component of the British Columbia French immersion language arts curriculum, it is nonetheless a small component. While most parents do not regard the teaching of French culture as a top priority, this attribute is more important to some parents than others. Because parents overwhelmingly ranked language skills as more important than cultural knowledge, it is more likely that the parent was unhappy with the level of language skills of the anglophone teachers than with a possible lack of cultural knowledge and instruction.

While it was hypothesized in chapter two that language skills might be considered less important than general teaching skills, this has been shown not to be the case. The high degree of importance attached to teaching skills shows that parents and Directors of Human Resources are presumably in agreement with the rigorous checking of teaching skills by universities prior to certification by the B.C.C.T. as discussed in the literature review. Teaching skills (classroom management, repertoire of teaching strategies and second language methodology training) were ranked second overall. Personal qualities (enthusiasm and a caring attitude) were ranked third.

Knowledge of francophone culture was ranked last amongst the four categories which invites us to put the earlier discussion on the importance of first language status into perspective. Parents may prefer francophone French immersion teacher candidates because they assume their linguistic abilities to be superior, which would corroborate the first place ranking of French language skills compared to other skills. Parents may in fact prefer any teacher with a high level of French competence and first language status may be a secondary consideration, although given a choice, French as a first language status is preferred.



While language skills were ranked as a top priority, most anecdotal comments relating to this question emphasized the importance of balance: to possess one set of qualities and skills at the expense of another would be undesirable. In other words, none of the respondents saw any benefit in having a teacher with excellent language skills but utterly lacking in teaching skills. Both parents and Directors of Human Resources may expect all qualified teachers to have a satisfactory level of classroom practice, but in the case of French immersion, they may expect a high level of French competence coupled with satisfactory teaching skills.

#### 4.4 *Research question 3*

*How severe is the teacher shortage in French immersion according to Directors of Human Resources?*

Given that a teacher shortage has been used as a justification for lowering teacher qualifications in some jurisdictions, a well informed discussion of teacher supply numbers is very important.

For the purpose of comparison with the general supply of teachers, Directors of Human Resources were asked to estimate the average supply of English stream teachers for the same school year based on the teacher supply scale in Table 3.

Table 3  
Teacher Supply Scale

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No shortage	6+ fully qualified applicants
	4 - 5 fully qualified applicants
	2 - 3 fully qualified applicants

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Shortage	1 fully qualified applicant
	Applicants who satisfy two of three qualifications criteria
	Applicants who satisfy one of three qualifications criteria
	No applicants

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Note. Based on the estimated average number of applicants per typical job posting in a given year.

#### 4.4.1 Results of survey

Fifty six percent (56%) of school districts reported having an overall shortage of French immersion teachers in the 2000 – 2001 school year. Forty four percent (44%) of school districts reported having an adequate supply of fully qualified French immersion teachers, on average, per typical French immersion position.

A French immersion teacher shortage was found to exist in over half of French immersion school districts British Columbia. On average, school districts in British Columbia had one fully qualified applicant per typical French immersion job opening in the 2001 - 2002 school year ( $\bar{M}$  = 4.08,  $\underline{SD}$  = 1.47), in sharp contrast to the English stream which typically had 4 - 5 fully qualified applicants per position ( $\bar{M}$  = 6.37,  $\underline{SD}$  = .89). Consequently, regardless of preference for francophones or anglophones, Directors of Human Resources generally do not have the luxury of much choice when hiring French immersion teachers. The average ratio of one applicant per

position suggests that most fully qualified French immersion applicants will easily obtain employment. In the English stream, no districts reported having a shortage of fully qualified teachers, on average, for a typical English stream position. All school districts reported having 2 –3 fully qualified applicants or more per English stream position, on average (see Figure 7).

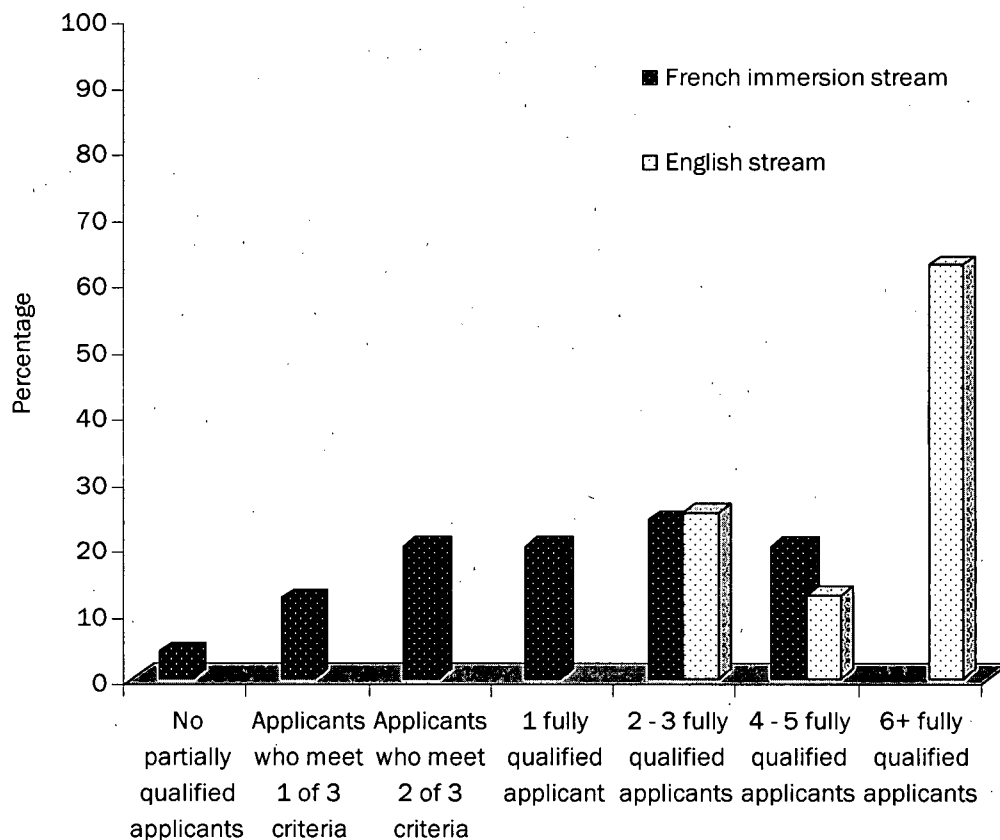


Figure 7. Average number of applicants per typical French immersion and English stream job opening in the 2001 - 2002 school year in British Columbia on a seven point scale.

On the seven point scale describing teacher supply, the supply of English stream teachers ( $M = 6.37$ ,  $SD = .89$ ) for most positions was therefore greater than the supply of French immersion teachers ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ) for most positions. A paired t-test between the French immersion and English streams comparing the difference in the supply of fully qualified teachers was significant,  $t(15) = -6.325$ ,  $p = .000$ .

A break down of school districts according to their urban or rural situation showed that fully qualified French immersion teachers are more readily available in urban areas ( $M = 4.71$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) than in rural areas ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ). A one way ANOVA of the supply of French immersion teachers yielded a significant difference between urban and rural districts,  $F(1,23) = 15.42$ ,  $p = .001$ .

In the English stream, a one way ANOVA test showed that the difference in the supply of teachers in urban ( $M = 6.58$ ,  $SD = .793$ ) and rural ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) districts was not statistically significant,  $F(1,14) = 3.02$ ,  $p = .10$ .

#### **4.4.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments**

In the semi-structured interviews, Directors of Human Resources were asked if they considered their school district to be experiencing a shortage of French immersion teachers. Their responses corroborated our original definition of a teacher shortage.

For example, in a school district where the average supply of French immersion teachers in 2001 - 2002 was described as having only partially qualified applicants fulfilling two of three criteria, Director of Human Resources 30 stated,

It would be great to have a surplus of French immersion teachers like in the regular track. Now we have to take a chance on candidates. We do not have the choice and quality [of the regular track] ... When teachers from out of province come here and apply for jobs, they apply to many districts in the area. If it is apparent that they are good teachers with experience, we start hiring on speculation. We don't know what position we will slot them into but we give them a contract knowing positions will open up. We find that we are generally phoning only ten minutes ahead or behind other districts ... There is a tendency of French immersion teachers to drift out of French immersion into the English stream. One frequently sees teachers move from French immersion to the English stream, but never from the English stream to the French immersion stream.

In a school district where the average supply of French immersion teachers in 2001 - 2002 was described in the survey as one applicant per typical job opening, I asked Director of

Human Resources 13 in the interview whether the school district was experiencing a French immersion teacher shortage. This was the response,

Yes. Or rather, we are experiencing a 'choice shortage.' We get an applicant, but we might not get the right applicant. Where we're really struggling is to get teachers on call. 'Is that another contracted position?' That discussion has gone on in school districts. In other words, teachers-on-call that would get paid a regular salary. We need a pool of contracted teachers on call. We need to recruit a pool of people. We need to have them in contracted positions, fully trained and available ... If I were able to, on a separate contract, with money coming in: 'Your district is receiving funds for one hundred teachers in French immersion. But this fund is going to add ten more to your T.O.C. pool over your allocation.' I would work them everyday but they would be district on call teachers, fully trained and available. The moment I have an opening, there they go. Then I'm never caught in a bind of recruitment. All districts struggle the same way.

The following anecdotal comments came from Directors of Human Resources who cited an overall shortage of French immersion teachers in their district.

"We need more trained teachers!!" Director of Human Resources 19

"Secondary Mathematics and Science French immersion teachers are impossible to recruit." Director of Human Resources 26

"At this time we are unable to attract candidates from British Columbia. Our recruiting now relies on "word of mouth" recommendations and searches across the country." Director of Human Resources 4

The French immersion teacher supply numbers reveal that it is far less difficult to obtain employment in French immersion than in the English stream. This situation may have negative consequences as related by Parent 37, "I found it very disappointing last year when my son had a poor French immersion teacher. She stated her reason for teaching in French immersion as "That's where the jobs are!" Not very encouraging to a parent who thought long and hard about choosing French immersion!"

And finally, in a school district where the average supply of French immersion teachers in 2001 - 2002 was described as 2 - 3 fully qualified applicants per typical job opening, Director of Human Resources 18 was asked if the district were currently experiencing a teacher shortage,

Not currently. A number of years ago we were. There tends to be a fair number of teachers applying for French immersion positions. Government cutbacks have caused reductions in the teaching force. Now, that can all change with the flip of a coin based on if the Federal government increases funding to French immersion and we would be increasing our French immersion numbers along with every other district in the province. I am guardedly optimistic that we are in good shape. Extra funding is good news but it's also worrying around issues of supply and demand. We do not have a teacher on call shortage this year. I get teacher on call applications that I can't consider. We still have French teachers-on-call at this point in the year who have not moved into permanent positions. It's an indication of the times.

The following anecdotal comments came from Directors of Human Resources who cited an adequate supply of French immersion teachers in their district.

"So far we have been able to recruit some quality candidates - I'm worried this will not last." Respondent 14, Director of Human Resources group

"Selection of senior secondary French immersion teachers that also have a specialty teaching area (math, computers, science, etc.) is the most difficult." Director of Human Resources 3

"We often have part time positions and it may be difficult to find qualified people available." Director of Human Resources 6

These comments show that even districts which do not cite an overall shortage may not be able to find teachers who have double specialties (eg. French immersion mathematics) or for part time positions.

One Director of Human Resources pointed out geographical location as a factor that exacerbates the shortage of French immersion teachers. "[The recruitment of French immersion teachers is] getting particularly difficult in the North!" Director of Human Resources 9.

#### **4.4.3 Discussion**

The present study corroborates the findings of two earlier studies (Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Macfarlane & Hart, 2002) which found that a shortage of French immersion teachers exists in British Columbia. Using a numerical scale (see Table 3), the present study found that a French immersion teacher shortage existed in over half of school districts in the 2001 - 2002 school year. The question of whether or not a teacher shortage exists is an important one as a teacher shortage has been used as an excuse to lower professional standards and issue emergency credentials in the United States. Tens of thousands of people in the United States currently hold emergency credentials and are allowed to teach because they have a Bachelor's degree but without teacher training (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001; Department of Defense, 2001; Pipho, 1998; Teach for America, 2002).

Anecdotal comments from the follow-up interviews corroborated the operational definition of a teacher shortage as defined in Table 3. Districts with one or fewer fully qualified applicants, on average, per French immersion job opening considered themselves to be experiencing a shortage of French immersion teachers. Districts with two to three fully qualified applicants per position, on average, did not consider themselves to be experiencing a French immersion teacher shortage.

The career pathway for a French immersion teacher often begins with an assignment as a teacher-on-call (Grimmett & Echols, 2000). One Director of Human Resources in the present study noted the tendency of teachers to initially seek employment in French immersion, but then to drift into the English stream later in their careers. When comparing French immersion teacher supply numbers (one applicant per job opening on average, in all districts) to English stream supply numbers (five to six applicants per job opening on average, in all districts), one can conclude that it is far easier to obtain employment in French immersion than in the English

stream. It is therefore not surprising that a percentage of teachers begin their careers in French immersion before moving to their preferred assignment in the English stream.

One parent complained of a teacher accepting to teach in French immersion simply to obtain employment. This anecdote, while unfortunate, cannot be said to characterize the French immersion program. In any field, people will seek employment for a variety of reasons and perform their jobs with varying degrees of enthusiasm. This anecdote is interesting in that it highlights the possible negative consequences of a low supply of French immersion teachers. Another consequence of the shortage is that school districts must sometimes compete against each other to hire French immersion teachers rather than having a wide selection of candidates from which to choose. The lack of choice may diminish the quality of the pool of teachers hired to teach in French immersion. With a greater supply of teachers, districts would be able to perform background checks in a more leisurely manner and have a greater assurance of hiring high quality teacher candidates. However, increasing enrolment numbers for French immersion in British Columbia suggest that the program is nonetheless perceived in a positive light.

#### 4.5 *Research question 4*

*In what ways, if any, would Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia be willing to modify their expectations of French immersion program recruitment practices during a shortage of French immersion teachers?*

*In what ways, if any, would parents in British Columbia be willing to modify their expectations of French immersion program recruitment practices during a shortage of French immersion teachers?*

##### 4.5.1 **Results of survey**

Directors of Human Resources and parents generally agreed that it was unacceptable to lower the expected level of French language competence in the event of a teacher shortage. On a seven point scale, parents disagreed slightly more ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) with lowering the expected level of French language competence than did Directors of Human Resources ( $M =$



5.00,  $SD = 1.81$ ), however, this difference is not significant:  $t(71) = -0.935$ ,  $p = 0.35$  (see Figures 8 and 9). Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the willingness to lower standards of French competence between urban and rural Directors of Human Resources,  $t(1,25) = 0.046$ ,  $p = 0.831$ .

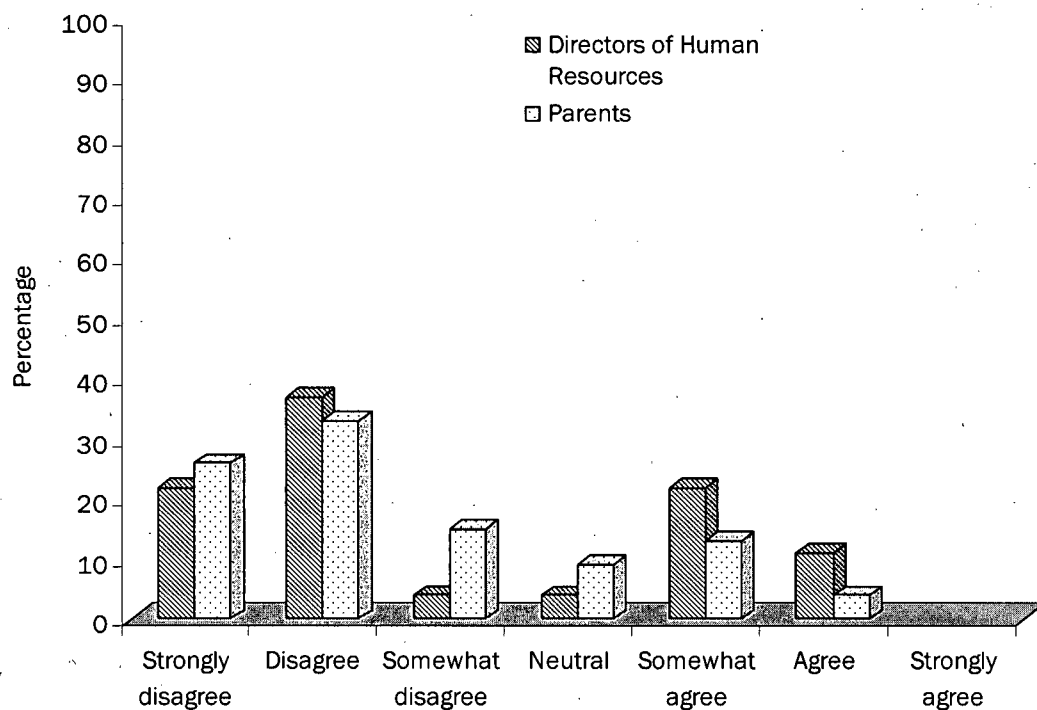


Figure 8. Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of lowering standards of French language competence in the event of a teacher shortage on a seven point scale.

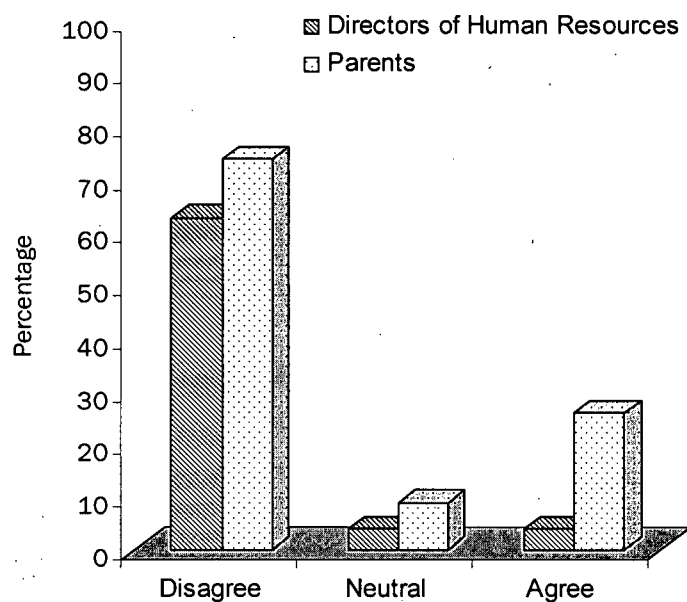


Figure 9. Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of lowering standards of French language competence in the event of a teacher shortage using the Collapsing Method.

On a seven point scale, Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ) were significantly more in agreement than were parents ( $M = 5.44$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) that it was acceptable to hire French immersion teachers without second language methodology education in the event of a teacher shortage,  $t(70) = -2.133$ ,  $p = 0.036$  (see Figures 10 and 11).

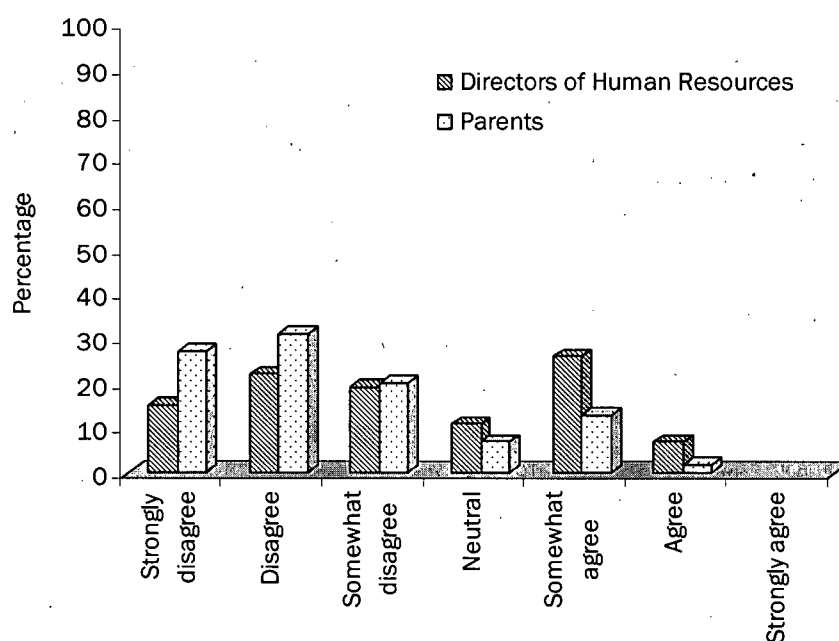


Figure 10. Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of hiring French immersion teachers without an educational background in second language methodology on a seven point scale.

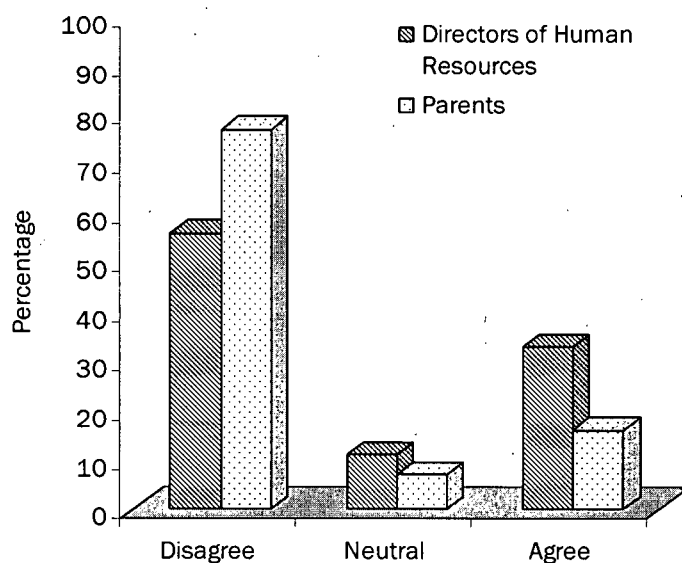


Figure 11. Comparison of parental and Directors of Human Resources' views on the acceptability of hiring French immersion teachers without an educational background in second language methodology using the Collapsing Method.

Both parents and Directors of Human Resources overwhelmingly agreed that if standards of French language competence were lowered, French immersion teachers should be required to complete additional course work. On a seven point scale, parents were slightly more in agreement ( $M = 6.35$ ,  $SD = .87$ ) than were Directors of Human Resources ( $M = 5.77$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) with the requirement of additional course work. However, the difference is not significant,  $t(34) = -1.770$ ,  $p = 0.086$ .

#### **4.5.2 Results of interviews and anecdotal comments**

"Fluency in French must remain high to maintain strong programs," said Director of Human Resources 17.

Parent 1 voiced her objection to lowering standards during the recruitment process writing, "We must be careful not to lower our standards too much in regards to quality teachers, simply in order to get a body in that classroom to teach the students." However, the same parent expressed strong disagreement with requiring teachers to complete extra course work after being hired and said, "For me it is a worry that 'You have to do this.' That bothers me because if a teacher has gone through the teaching program, they have some skills that make them a strong enough teacher to be there ... Teachers can recognize it themselves if they have an area where they can upgrade themselves."

Director of Human Resources 30 stated, "Most of our French immersion teacher applicants do not have training in second language methodology. Francophone teachers, for example, may have training in teaching French as a first language. I don't think this training makes a difference in the first year when teachers are in 'survival mode.' But later in their careers, this training is helpful for the reflective teacher. Principals have not raised the lack of training in second language methodology as an issue ... [Extra course work requirements] would be almost impossible to enforce. It would involve changing the collective agreement. Teachers-on-call would not take the French immersion jobs if they were required to take extra courses."

The high degree of importance attached to language skills was corroborated by the consensus of both groups on the minimum level of French competence expected of a French

immersion teacher, and both groups' unwillingness to lower the expected level of French competence in the event of a teacher shortage. In fact, in all survey questions regarding French language skills, parents and Directors of Human Resources were generally in agreement on the relative importance of French language skills compared to other skills and attributes, had equally high expectations for French language proficiency, and found it equally unacceptable to lower standards of French language competence even in the event of a teacher shortage.

Directors of Human Resources found it slightly more acceptable than parents to hire teachers lacking an educational background in French immersion methodology. This corroborates our finding that language skills were ranked slightly more highly than teaching skills although both were important. The second place ranking of teaching skills relative to language skills may suggest that if forced to compromise in one area or the other, that it may be preferable to accept candidates without an educational background in second language methodology than candidates with insufficient French language proficiency. Second language methodology may be seen as more easily learned than the acquisition of language skills, and thus, a less serious deficiency when lacking.

Further corroborating the importance of French language skills, when asked if French immersion teachers should be required to improve their language skills if standards were lowered due to a shortage of teachers, both groups were strongly in agreement. However, when interviewees were asked what this course work would look like and how it might be implemented, all suggested optional courses and incentives to improve language skills rather than requiring course work. Some respondents suggested that the coursework should be run by universities as a 30 credit program which would also allow teachers to move up the salary scale.

#### **4.5.3 Discussion**

The positive response to the question of whether or not French immersion teachers should be required to complete extra course work if entry standards are lowered confirms the respondents' unwillingness to lower standards. The logistical problems and consequences that might be associated with implementing extra course work requirements include: changing

collective agreements, designing courses, the availability of courses in all areas of the province, and the likely negative effect such a requirement would have on the already scarce supply of French immersion teachers. The need for extra course work would be erased if all French immersion teachers had the requisite level of French and education in second language methodology prior to being hired. Teacher supply numbers from the present study reveal that many partially qualified teachers are currently being hired into French immersion in some school districts, a situation which school districts should address through in-service including opportunities to improve both French language skills and education in second language methodology.

Contrary to my hypothesis as outlined in Section 2.10, that school districts experiencing a French immersion teacher shortage would be more likely to lower standards than districts with an adequate supply, this does not appear to be the case. When I compared school districts' willingness to lower standards between school districts experiencing a shortage of French immersion teachers and those who were not, or between urban and rural school districts, there was no significant difference in the willingness to lower standards. While there was some variation in the willingness to lower standards from district to district, this willingness does not appear to be a function of a school district's supply of teachers or urban or rural status.

Parents and Directors of Human Resources in British Columbia are opposed to lowering standards even in the event of a teacher shortage which has been found to exist in French immersion in over half of school districts. If school districts are forced to lower standards due to an insufficient number of applicants, as some appear forced to do, language competence, which was ranked a top priority, may be the last area in which they are willing to compromise. Directors of Human Resources expressed slightly more willingness than did parents to hire teachers without an educational background in second language methodology than teachers with lower French language skills in the event of a teacher shortage. A reason for this may be that Directors of Human Resources recognize that they have to set priorities in a situation if their pool of French immersion teacher applicants is limited. They may also view second language methodology as more easily learned on the job than French language skills.

In the 2002 - 2003 school year, the British Columbia College of Teachers had only two French immersion teachers teaching on letters of permission. This figure suggests that coursework requirements and teaching skills of French immersion teachers have met minimum standards set out by the B.C.C.T. Because French language proficiency is not tested by the B.C.C.T. or universally in some other way, school districts must exercise discretion and use their own tools to test language skills to determine whether minimum levels of French proficiency have been met.

At the present time, the findings of the present study bode well for the future of French immersion. The B.C.C.T. has maintained high standards of general teaching skills through collaboration with universities. Furthermore, major stakeholders, both parents and Directors of Human Resources, are generally opposed to lowering standards even during a teacher shortage. Although school districts may be forced to compromise at times, the general opposition to lowering standards suggests that the issues of qualifications and high standards are important to hiring authorities and that they are unlikely to have a laissez-faire attitude toward the recruitment of French immersion teachers. Major recent changes by the government to the B.C.C.T. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2003), including its governance by many non-teachers and the right to disregard any by-laws are of serious concern that the political agenda will override the educative agenda and allow for sudden and major changes in standards as per the wishes of the new governing structure. The impact of these changes and the intentions of the government in making these changes will become evident with time and may include issuing teaching certificates to non-teachers or creating crash courses in teacher training, similar to current practices in the United States which are said to alleviate the teacher shortage. According to the present study, parents and Directors of Human Resources would be opposed to lowering standards and, by extension, pursuing the American model of alternative certification.

#### 4.6 *Research question 5*

*What means do Directors of Human Resources employ to screen the French language skills of prospective French immersion teachers in British Columbia?*

Directors of Human Resources were selected as participants in this study because they determine admission to teacher-on-call lists which is a main route to permanent employment in British Columbia as discussed in Chapter Two. After a teacher has been hired on a permanent contract, seniority and other factors beyond the control of individual hiring authorities frequently dictates who will be hired into specific positions: "This [description of the hiring process] must be qualified by saying that it depended on [the applicant's] seniority in the district if an internal posting, [and the] level of posting," wrote Director of Human Resources 1. When a teacher has once been deemed qualified to teach in French immersion, they cannot generally be deemed unqualified to teach in French immersion. Thus, the initial stamp of approval is extremely important.

Each school district was asked if they checked the level of French competence of French immersion teacher candidates, and if so, to describe how this was done. The latter part of this question was open-ended and responses are summarized and discussed below.

#### **4.6.1 Results of survey**

All districts reported that they do check the level of French competence of French immersion teacher candidates. Each district mentioned using one or more of the following tools for this purpose: an oral assessment, a written assessment, or reliance on external bodies or persons for their report of a candidate's level of French. These assessment methods are not mutually exclusive. Seventy-eight percent (78%) rely on external bodies or persons for their assessment of a candidate's French competence. Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents mentioned the need to have a designated person (or persons) responsible for checking the level of French competence of prospective French immersion candidates in their comments. Some stated this person was a member of the human resources team, a principal in the district or a French consultant.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of school districts assess oral language skills. Anecdotal comments suggest varying degrees of formality of this assessment ranging from an oral test, a



pre-employment interview conducted in French, or a conversation. For example, Director of Human Resources 27 summarized the procedure for assessing French language skills in the following manner: "Check paper credentials. Phone candidate en français. Phone reference re: français. Part of interview en français. It is a check not a thorough evaluation."

Director of Human Resources 7 described how applicants can highlight their French skills to obtain employment in French immersion, "Some applicants have started French immersion in Grade six. But the big challenge for them is that they haven't spoken French since Grade twelve. Then they realize, 'Oops, there are no jobs out there. Let me see if I can improve my French to see if that will get me a job. Even in a forty-five minute interview, I can see these students who went through the French immersion program becoming more confident in their French. It comes back to them. They realize they said 'le' instead of 'la'. They should be encouraged to teach in French immersion."

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of school districts assess writing skills. Some called this a written test while others said they asked for a written sample, again suggesting varying degrees of formality.

Letters of reference, phone references, practicum reports and transcripts are relied upon for their indication of a candidate's level of French language proficiency and may be used in addition to oral or written assessments. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of school districts rely on letters of reference, forty-eight percent (48%) rely on reference checks by phone, forty-eight percent (48%) rely on practicum reports, and twenty two percent (22%) use transcripts as indicators of a candidate's level of French language competence.

Respondents were asked if they use the same procedure with every French immersion teacher candidate to ensure uniformity. Ninety-two percent (92%) of school districts stated that they use the same procedure for every applicant. However, Director of Human Resources 2 who responded that the same procedure is used for every applicant added the following comment, "Written test [in addition to oral test] if we are in doubt."

One district stated that applicants who had traveled to or studied in francophone places in addition to their studies were considered better French immersion teacher candidates than those having taken French courses only.

#### **4.6.2 Discussion**

While all respondents were generally in agreement on the minimum level of French competence expected of a French immersion teacher, and considered strong French language skills to be a top priority in relation to other skills and attributes, the tools used to screen the level of French proficiency of French immersions seem inconsistent at best, and unreliable and possibly invalid at worst. At the university level in British Columbia, pre-service French immersion teachers must pass a rigorous test of French proficiency (Bournot-Trites et al., 1989). Across Canada, the standards for the testing of French language skills of French immersion teachers vary widely (see Appendix E). Some Canadian universities rely on candidates' self-identification as qualified to teach in French immersion while others have rigorous French language proficiency tests similar in style and rigour to the one administered by British Columbia universities. At the provincial level, the British Columbia College of Teachers does not test the French proficiency of French immersion teachers but leaves testing to the discretion of individual school districts and universities. The present study found that testing practices vary dramatically at the school district level. The problems with the testing methods used at the school district level include the absence of a universal measuring stick which would ensure that a single minimum standard would exist for all French immersion teachers throughout the province. As the situation stands, tests range in their degree of formality and rigour and may assure high standards in some districts but not in others. A further problem of current practices is that some tools used by school districts seem unreliable and may not be valid. For example, some hiring authorities reported that they will call a reference listed on a resume to inquire about a candidate's level of French. The reference may have very low or very high standards of what is an acceptable minimum level of French, or may have little knowledge of the candidate's level of French but give an opinion nonetheless. It is encouraging that all districts report that they do test the French proficiency of prospective French

immersion teachers, but while some districts seem to have reliable tools in place, other districts seem to employ unreliable and possibly invalid tools. As a consequence, the level of French proficiency of French immersion teachers may vary widely within a single district and across the province.

Many school districts reported that they look at past course work in French as an indicator of French proficiency. One study (Bayliss & Vignola, 2000) concluded that pre-service teachers holding French degrees may pass or fail pre-admission French proficiency tests of some universities regardless of similar previous course work in French amongst candidates. According to that study, a better predictor of success on the test was having lived in a francophone community for over a month.

One concerning anecdote was the Director of Human Resources who described a typical interview scenario where she noted the improvement in an applicant's level of French during the course of a forty minute interview. She stated that this typical applicant probably would not have studied or spoken French since graduating from a high school French immersion program. Such a person, without any university level French courses or long-term experience living in a francophone community, was nonetheless described as a desirable French immersion teacher candidate who should be encouraged to pursue a career in French immersion. If hired, teaching in French immersion may have a detrimental impact on this teacher's level of French as he or she hears mistakes repeated over and over again (Flewelling, 1995). Thus, not only is such a teacher candidate's French rusty from lack of practice, the level of French may never have been high and may deteriorate with repeated exposure to errors.

Another potentially problematic scenario is the districts who do not assess oral and written skills themselves but rely on letters of reference and transcripts as indicators of a candidate's level of French proficiency. Most new French immersion teachers do not have uniform background credentials given the small number of graduates from British Columbia French immersion pre-service teacher training programs. Varying program requirements, French proficiency tests and course work backgrounds of teachers who have completed their teacher training in other provinces may contribute to difficulties in accurately and reliably assessing a

candidate's level of French if it not checked by the district itself. Apart from checking transcripts, phoning a reference was another example of an extremely unreliable means of checking a candidate's level of French cited by some Directors of Human Resources. Every individual reference would have his or her own measuring stick for judging French competence which one could hardly consider objective or reliable.

What is contradictory is that while all respondents were in agreement on the level of French required to teach in French immersion, there is no consensus or consistency at the school district level on how this level is verified. The various means used to screen the French language competence of French immersion teachers in school districts throughout British Columbia confirms that the gaps and inconsistencies in this system and do not provide assurance that a uniform minimum level of French competence exists for all French immersion teachers in British Columbia.

The opportunity to screen a candidate's level of French before hiring is critical because once hired, the candidate is generally en route to permanent employment (Grimmett & Echols, 2000), and the potential damage of hiring teachers with inadequate French cannot be undone. Poor choices in recruitment may have very long term consequences. The results of this survey suggest that while some districts may verify the level of French proficiency in an objective, reliable manner, others appear to have inconsistent standards and use unreliable and possibly invalid tools.

#### 4.7 *Research question 6*

*Is there a match or a mismatch between parental views and the views of British Columbia school district Directors of Human Resources on priorities in the recruitment of French immersion teachers?*

Matching priorities between parents and Directors of Human Resources may predict high levels of parental satisfaction with the recruitment of French immersion teachers. On the other hand, conflicts may arise in areas where parental expectations are not met.

#### 4.7.1 Results

Tables 11, 12, 13 and 14 summarize the areas of agreement and disagreement between parents and Directors of Human Resources where they were compared in this study. Areas of disagreement between groups were given only if the difference was statistically significant. Areas of disagreement within groups indicate a lack of consensus within the parent group or within the Director of Human Resources group.

Table 11.

Comparison of Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Priorities on the Expected Level of French Language Competence of a French immersion Teacher

Areas of agreement			Areas of disagreement
Parents and Directors of Human Resources had a high degree of consensus within and between groups on the minimum expected level of French competence for a French immersion teacher.	Parents and Directors of Human Resources found it equally unacceptable to compromise on French language skills in the event of a teacher shortage.	Both groups rated French language skills most highly when forced to choose amongst language skills, teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of francophone culture.	None

Table 12.

Comparison of Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Priorities on the Formal Qualifications of a French immersion Teacher

Areas of agreement	Areas of disagreement
Both groups were agreed that graduates from the French immersion stream of university pre-service programs were desirable French immersion teacher candidates.	Parents found it less acceptable than Directors of Human Resources to hire teachers without an educational background in second language methodology.
	Although the mean scores for the two groups were similar, there was no consensus within the groups on the desirability of hiring graduates from the French Core stream of university pre-service programs to teach in French immersion.

Table 13.

Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Rankings of Four Sets of Skills and Attributes of the French immersion Teacher

Areas of agreement	Areas of disagreement
<p>According to anecdotal comments, both groups felt that balance was important. To possess one set of skills at the expense of another was not desirable.</p>	<p>Both groups ranked language skills as most important overall.</p> <p>Both groups ranked teaching skills as second most important.</p> <p>Personal qualities were ranked in third place.</p> <p>Knowledge of French culture was ranked as least important amongst these skills and attributes.</p>

Table 14.  
Comparison of Parents' and Directors of Human Resources' Priorities on First Language Status  
and Bilingual Francophone Place of Origin

Areas of agreement		Areas of disagreement	
Parents and Directors of Human Resources rated French immersion teacher candidates from Quebec more highly than ones from France.	Parents and Directors of Human Resources rated the following as desirable French immersion teacher candidates: bilingual francophones from Quebec; bilingual anglophones; and graduates from the French immersion stream of university pre-service programs.	Parents rated bilingual francophones most highly overall.  Directors of Human Resources rated graduates from French immersion teacher education programs most highly overall, followed by bilingual anglophones.	Parents rated bilingual francophone French immersion teacher candidates from France more highly than did Directors of Human Resources.

This study also found that a French immersion teacher shortage exists in over half of school districts surveyed. None of the school districts were found to have a shortage of English stream teachers.

Willingness to lower hiring standards was not found to be a function of teacher supply as hypothesized in chapter two. Varying standards exist, but presumably, for other reasons.

School districts were found to use a wide variety of tools to evaluate the level of French competence of prospective French immersion teachers. These tools were found to vary in rigour and type. They included relying on external persons and bodies for their assessment of French language competence (practicum reports, transcripts and references). Some districts assessed oral French language skills and some districts assessed written French language skills. Many districts used a combination of assessment techniques.



#### 4.7.2 Discussion

Both parents and Directors of Human Resources were in agreement on the importance of strong French language skills for French immersion teachers. When given a forced choice amongst four sets of skills and attributes both groups ranked language skills as most important, followed by teaching skills, personal qualities and knowledge of French culture. Yet all anecdotal comments pertaining to this question emphasized that balance was important and that one set of skills was not desirable if it were possessed without the others. Both groups agreed on the minimum level of French competence expected of a French immersion teacher. In spite of this agreement in principle, there is no consistency in the practices used to measure French proficiency in different districts across the province.

The level of French proficiency of a French immersion teacher is extremely important as the teacher is the main model of French apart from exposure to authentic documents including books, songs, videos and computer programs. Children will imitate the teacher's pronunciation, be exposed to a broader or more limited vocabulary according to the teacher's use and instruction of vocabulary, and hear correct or incorrect sentence structures and idioms. While instructional style and teaching methods undoubtedly have a significant impact on students, the importance of high quality linguistic input cannot be disregarded.

The knowledge of French culture was ranked as least important, which leads us to two possible conclusions regarding the parents' stated preference for francophone French immersion teachers. First, if the preference for francophones is based on assumed superior language skills, then this reasoning corroborates our finding that a high level of French language competence is highly valued by parents. Second, if the preference for francophones is based on assumed superior knowledge of French culture, then the issue of first language status is probably a less important issue than the discussion of other attributes of a French immersion teacher.

## **Chapter 5: Implications and Areas for Further Study**

### **5.1     *The Testing of French proficiency at the school district level***

The present study presents a snapshot of practices currently in use to screen the level of prospective French immersion teachers. Encouragingly, all districts do screen the level of French proficiency of prospective immersion teachers. Means used to do so, however, vary dramatically from district to district, and from university to university across Canada as discussed in Section 2.2 and Appendix E. In individual districts, it is not clear that the means used to test French proficiency are always reliable and valid. For example, in some school districts the pre-employment interview is conducted in French. However, the language used in a pre-employment interview is different than the vocabulary required in the classroom to deliver instructions and discuss various content areas. Furthermore, the duration of a pre-employment interview may be short and may not provide a sufficiently broad sample of a candidate's ability to converse on different topics. Asking a reference to comment on the French proficiency of an applicant, as is the practice in some school districts, is also problematic since each person may have a different standard of what is an acceptable level of French proficiency for an immersion teacher. At times, candidates may express themselves well orally but may have difficulties writing with a high level of grammatical accuracy. If only their oral skills are tested, problems with written accuracy may go undetected.

The difficulties and potential pitfalls of the methods currently used to test the level of French proficiency at the school district level highlight the need to have a universal test that could be easily administered by all school districts. This test would need to be administered at a low cost, be easily administered by external persons in cases where school district personnel were unable or unavailable to do so, and have a high degree of reliability and validity. Another possible solution is that the provincial or federal governments, or both, would fund the development of a French proficiency test that could be administered by all Canadian universities that train French immersion teachers, or conversely, by all school districts that hire them. The

universal application of a cost-effective, reliable and valid test would be the best assurance possible that high standards are being consistently applied in the hiring of French immersion teachers. Such a test would allay concerns expressed by academics over the years and assure French immersion parents that their top priority, a high level of proficiency in French, is not being compromised in spite of a shortage of French immersion teachers.

School districts currently use a wide variety of testing practices which have varying degrees of reliability and validity. Due to constraints of time and cost, however, the tests and methods used by districts to screen the French proficiency of French immersion teachers were not studied in depth. The findings of the present exploratory study suggest that there are deeper issues at play that could be further investigated. For example, a sample of school districts of varying size and in various geographic locations during the hiring process could be further investigated. Such a study might have ethnographic elements where the Director of Human Resources would be accompanied and interviewed over a long period of time to see what pressures and influences affect recruitment decisions and to see whether or not hiring practices are consistent within a district and across districts. The handful of interviews conducted in this exploratory study already provided rich insights into current practices and trends that would merit further study.

## 5.2 *The Teacher shortage and entry standards at the school district level*

A shortage of French immersion teachers exists in over half of school districts in British Columbia. As found by Macfarlane and Hart (2002) and Grimmer and Echols (2000), some degree of compromise exists already. Overall, however, Directors of Human Resources and parents expressed opposition to lowering standards even in times of a teacher shortage, both with regard to French language proficiency as well as in requiring an educational background in second language methodology. In order to address the problem of being forced to hire partially qualified French immersion teachers, two types of in-service should be provided: first, the government and school districts should provide opportunities for teachers to improve their French

language skills through travel, workshops and social opportunities on a local level as well as other types of cultural exchanges. A second area in which French immersion teachers need professional development is in second language methodology. One Director of Human Resources stated that most teachers hired in that district do not have course work in second language methodology because they rely heavily on hiring francophones who have been educated to teach French as a first language. Additional courses in second language methodology would be useful for these teachers. Both parents and Directors of Human Resources were in favour of requiring extra coursework for French immersion teachers after they are hired if hiring standards are lowered. Practically, it would be difficult to implement extra coursework requirements for French immersion teachers. It is already difficult to recruit French immersion teachers and some would surely be put off by additional coursework requirements therefore worsening the shortage of French immersion teachers. However, voluntary opportunities and incentives may be an effective means of helping teachers improve their skills after being hired. Teachers generally value professional development opportunities and these opportunities should perhaps be focused more specifically at addressing the needs of French immersion teachers.

In describing the hiring process, one Director of Human Resources said that because districts compete against each other to hire French immersion teacher candidates, time constraints do not permit them to be as thorough in their background checks as they would like to be and that they sometimes take risks. One Director of Human Resources said that twelve of the fourteen new French immersion teachers that were hired in the 2001 - 2002 school year turned out to be excellent French immersion teachers. What about the two others? What is the impact of hiring two teachers who have some serious shortcomings? Clearly, if this situation repeats itself year after year throughout the province, the impact over time would be highly detrimental to students and to the entire program. The prevalence of such a scenario, however, is unknown and would be difficult to calculate. Again, a universal test of French proficiency would eliminate the risk of hiring teachers without sufficient language skills. Other skills and attributes must nonetheless be judged using other means.

It was noted in the follow-up interviews that many teachers move out of French immersion into the English stream after being hired but that the reverse did not occur. This career pathway may exist because it is easier to obtain employment in French immersion, thus, when teachers have their foot in the door and have enough seniority, they can move on to other assignments. For some teachers, it may be easier to teach in the English stream if they are not confident in their French skills. Some teachers may also find the high level of parent involvement in French immersion to be a source of stress and therefore wish to change streams. Given the shortage of French immersion teachers and the anecdotal suggestions that teacher retention is a problem in the French immersion program, it would be useful to document the experiences, stressors and motivating factors of French immersion teachers as they relate to job satisfaction and retention in French immersion. This could be done by tracking a group of newly hired French immersion teachers and documenting their experiences, possibly through focus groups or surveys, over several years.

The nature of the teacher shortage in French immersion is perhaps not one that captures the media's attention as there are no widespread reports of classrooms without teachers. However, some school districts do report (Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Macfarlane & Hart, 2002) that they are forced to hire partially qualified teachers to teach in French immersion as confirmed by the present study. Such a story may not grab headlines in the same way that a classroom without a teacher might, but is the situation less noteworthy? The nature of the compromise in districts experiencing a teacher shortage include being forced to hire teachers without training in second language methodology, or with a lower level of French language skills or with less than desirable teaching skills. In other school districts, the core group of teachers who are hired may be fully qualified but if they take leaves or are sick, may be replaced by non-specialists due to an insufficient number of French immersion teachers-on-call. A shortage of teachers-on-call is significant as it can seriously disrupt the continuity of the school year for children. A qualified and skilful teacher on call can assure a smooth transition and create a positive experience when the regular teacher must be absent. Given the recent Laczko-Kerr and Berliner study (2003) which demonstrated the detrimental impact of undercertified and underqualified teachers on student

learning, it is reasonable to speculate that the absence of an educational background in second language methodology may also have a detrimental impact on student learning in French immersion. By pairing fully qualified and partially qualified French immersion teachers (see definition in section 2.4) with similar levels of French proficiency, and measuring student achievement in language over time, the benefits of an educational background in French immersion methodology may be demonstrated. Given that approximately one third of Directors of Human Resources stated that it was acceptable to hire teachers without an educational background in French immersion methodology in the case of a teacher shortage, it would be important to determine whether or not these courses bring about measurable benefits for children.

### 5.3 *Teacher certification*

The current provincial government has enacted legislation (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2003) that fundamentally alters the structure and role of the British Columbia College of Teachers. One key issue is that all by-laws of the College can be over-ruled or disregarded by the new body. Further, teachers will not be regulating their own profession. The intentions of the government with these changes are unclear. Is this a first step in moving toward alternative certification as practised in the United States? The present study has clearly found that parents and Directors of Human Resources oppose a lowering of standards even in times of teacher shortage. This conclusion echoes the findings of a Vector Poll (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1999) among the general population of Canadian who were also strongly opposed to lowering standards of teacher qualifications. If radical changes in recruitment and certification practices are imminent due to the changes to the structure and regulations of the B.C.C.T., it would be important to survey a broader group of stakeholders including parents, teachers and administrators on the issue of whether or not certifying non-teachers is acceptable, in addition to the questions posed in this survey on whether or not standards of language competence or coursework requirements should be lowered in some circumstances. As noted in Section 2.6, the

practice of giving emergency credentials to non-teachers is becoming more widespread in the United States and has been found to have serious negative consequences for student learning (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003). A teacher shortage, the rationale for giving emergency credentials in the United States, does not currently exist in the English stream in British Columbia, but does exist in French immersion and other specialty areas. Does the government intend to certify non-teachers to fill these specialty positions? Such a move would most likely engender strong opposition from parents who generally oppose the lowering of hiring standards.

#### 5.4 *The French language skills of the French immersion teacher*

The results of this study suggest that although parents prefer francophone French immersion teachers, French language skills may be more important than first language status. French immersion parents indicated an overall preference for francophone teachers, particularly from Quebec, while Directors of Human Resources expressed a preference for hiring French immersion pre-service program graduates, followed by anglophones. Both groups were in agreement, however, that French language competence is a top priority (see Section 4.3.1, Table 9) and were in agreement on the minimum level of French competence that should be expected of French immersion teachers (see Figure 5). Because parents ranked French language competence as a top priority and knowledge of French culture a relatively low priority, parents may associate francophone status with superior French language skills. The assumption that all francophones have superior language skills is an erroneous one as noted in Section 2.5. In fact, test administrators at U.B.C. have found that some who call themselves francophones do not meet the minimum language requirements for teaching in immersion. These may be heritage language learners who have grown up in a francophone family but have completed their schooling and socialized predominantly in English. The presence of heritage language learners who call themselves francophones underscores the need for a reliable and objective test to reliably determine the level of French competence of French immersion teacher candidates, and the dangers of relying on candidate self-identification.

Because they are enrolling their children in French immersion, the parent group selected for this study may place more emphasis on the importance of language skills than would the parents of children in the English stream. One should therefore not generalize the findings of this study to English stream parents because the views of parents enrolling their children in French immersion may differ from other parents in that they may place more emphasis on the importance of language skills. Because the parents who participated in this study are members of Canadian Parents for French, they may be more vocal in their support of French immersion than other French immersion parents. Thus their views cannot be generalized to the entire population of French immersion parents.

Another area that would merit further study would be to track the improvement or deterioration of French language skills of French immersion teachers with varied levels of French proficiency over several years. One academic (Flewelling, 1995) has suggested that a French immersion teacher's French is likely to deteriorate over time due to repeated exposure to students' errors. However, perhaps the opportunity to use French on a daily basis and personal study and use of French may improve French immersion teachers' French over time. Another important factor may be the degree to which colleagues communicate amongst each other in French in a school and the acceptability of using French amongst teachers (which may be considered rude in a dual track school where some teachers do not speak French). The impact of the French immersion classroom environment on the level of the teacher's French may also be dependent on their initial level of French. If they were out of practice, perhaps the daily use would improve their French. Without further study, it is difficult to speculate whether improvement or deterioration over time is more likely.

## 5.5 *Summary*

The results of the present study have serious policy implications. In spite of a consensus amongst British Columbia university French immersion pre-service programs, parents and Directors of Human Resources on the minimum expected level of French competence for the



immersion teacher, the current tools used to verify French competence do not guarantee that minimum standards are being maintained in the process of teacher education, certification and recruitment. This finding suggests that a universal, valid and reliable tool for measuring French competence to be used by school districts would need to be developed. Given the consensus amongst stakeholders on the expected level of French competence for immersion teachers, policies and practices that would guarantee consistent standards may be favourably viewed by parents and hiring authorities.

Parents may be surprised by the high number of anglophones currently teaching in immersion given their preference for francophone French immersion teachers. However, the hiring preferences expressed by parents and school district hiring authorities may not have much influence over hiring decisions given the current shortage of French immersion teachers in the province. On average, school districts have one fully qualified applicant per French immersion job opening which suggests that most districts have little choice in the selection of French immersion teachers. French immersion programs may also represent an easy point of entry to the job market for new teachers. Regardless of teacher supply, parents expect French immersion teachers to have a high level of French proficiency, an educational background in second language methodology and good teaching skills. In order to redress situations where school districts have been forced to compromise due to a shortage of French immersion teachers, it would be important to provide in-service to French immersion teachers in the areas of French language proficiency and second language methodology in order to maintain high quality French immersion programs in the future.

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### Appendix C: Questionnaire for Directors of Human Resources

A Please **circle one** response for each of the following questions.

- 1 Are you the parent of a child currently or formerly enrolled in French Immersion?

Yes

No

- 2 Please circle the descriptor that best describes your level of French.

Beginner

Semi-  
fluent

Fluent

Equivalent to  
francophone

Francophone

- 3 Please circle the descriptor that best describes your school district.

Metro

Urban

Rural

B Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate descriptor.

- 1 A bilingual francophone from France is a desirable French Immersion teacher candidate.

Strongly  
agree

Agree

Agree  
somewhat

Neutral

Disagree  
somewhat

Disagree

Strongly  
disagree

- 2 A bilingual francophone from Quebec is a desirable French Immersion teacher candidate.

Strongly  
agree

Agree

Agree  
somewhat

Neutral

Disagree  
somewhat

Disagree

Strongly  
disagree

- 3 A bilingual anglophone is a desirable French Immersion teacher candidate.

Strongly  
agree

Agree

Agree  
somewhat

Neutral

Disagree  
somewhat

Disagree

Strongly  
disagree

- 4 A bilingual francophone is a more desirable French Immersion teacher candidate than a bilingual anglophone.

Strongly  
agree

Agree

Agree  
somewhat

Neutral

Disagree  
somewhat

Disagree

Strongly  
disagree

- 5 A graduate from the French Immersion stream of a university teacher pre-service education program is a desirable French Immersion teaching candidate for the French Immersion program.

Strongly  
agree

Agree

Agree  
somewhat

Neutral

Disagree  
somewhat

Disagree

Strongly  
disagree

- 6 A graduate from the French Core stream of the university teacher pre-service education program is a desirable French Immersion teaching candidate for the French Immersion program.
- |                |       |                |         |                   |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Agree somewhat | Neutral | Disagree somewhat | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
- 7 In the event of a teacher shortage, it is acceptable that a school district lower the expected level of language competence required of French Immersion teachers.
- |                |       |                |         |                   |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Agree somewhat | Neutral | Disagree somewhat | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
- 8 It is acceptable to hire someone without training in second language methodology to teach in French Immersion.
- |                |       |                |         |                   |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Agree somewhat | Neutral | Disagree somewhat | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
- 9 If hiring standards are lowered, the French Immersion teacher should be required to improve his or her language skills by completing additional coursework or other activities after being hired.
- |                |       |                |         |                   |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Agree somewhat | Neutral | Disagree somewhat | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|

C Please **rank** the following list of skills and attributes of prospective French Immersion teachers in order of importance. 1= most important 9= least important

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| _____ fluency in French                       | _____ spoken and written accuracy |
| _____ knowledge about francophone culture     | _____ enthusiasm                  |
| _____ training in second language methodology | _____ pronunciation               |
| _____ classroom management skills             | _____ caring attitude             |
| _____ repertoire of teaching strategies       |                                   |

D Please indicate the minimum level French competence you expect of a French Immersion teacher by **checking one** of the following boxes.

- ☐ Level 1 - Speech is halting. Vocabulary is basic, repetitive and error-laden. Makes many grammatical errors although some simple sentences are correct. Accent, pronunciation and intonation are poor.
- ☐ Level 2 - Speech is generally hesitant. Able to get message across with repetition and rephrasing. Grammar is generally correct but makes some errors. Is able to hold basic conversations but cannot discuss topics requiring specialized vocabulary. Errors in pronunciation and accent do not interfere with comprehension.

- ☐ Level 3 - Able to discuss some topics fluently but is often left searching for words. Cannot use complex sentence constructions and level of vocabulary limits the amount of precise information conveyed. Pronunciation is clear though not native-like. While many topics can be discussed, the level of language is not always appropriate to the audience or situation
- ☐ Level 4 - Speech is generally fluent with occasional hesitations. Makes few written and spoken errors. Makes few pronunciation errors. Vocabulary is sufficient to discuss most topics. The level of language is usually appropriate to the audience
- ☐ Level 5 - Speech and writing are fluent, free of grammatical errors and equivalent to that of a native speaker. Vocabulary is broad and level of language is always appropriate to the audience.

- E** *For the purpose question E1, a fully qualified candidate is defined as one who*  
*(1) has a very good command of French,*  
*(2) has very good teaching skills, and*  
*(3) has training in second language methodology.*

- 1** On **average** in the 2001 - 2002 school year, we had the following type and number of applicants for each French Immersion teaching vacancy...

6+ fully qualified applicants	4-5 fully qualified applicants	2-3 fully qualified applicants	one (1) fully qualified applicant	applicants who satisfy two of the three above criteria	applicants who satisfy one of the three above criteria	no qualified applicants
-------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	--	----------------------------

- For the purpose question E2, a fully qualified candidate is defined as one who*  
*(1) has a very good command of English,*  
*(2) has very good teaching skills, and*  
*(3) has training appropriate to his or her classroom assignment.*

- 2** On **average** in the 2001 - 2002 school year, we had the following type and number of applicants for each English stream teaching vacancy...

6+ fully qualified applicants	4-5 fully qualified applicants	2-3 fully qualified applicants	one (1) fully qualified applicant	applicants who satisfy two of the three above criteria	applicants who satisfy one of the three above criteria	no qualified applicants
-------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	--	----------------------------



- 3 . Does your district check the level of French competence of French Immersion teacher candidates?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe how this is done (letter of reference, practicum report, written test, etc.)

- 4 . Do you use the same procedure or criteria for each applicant?

- F . Do you have further comments you wish to add regarding priorities in the recruitment of French Immersion teachers in British Columbia?

### Appendix D : Questionnaire for parents

A. Please **circle one** response for each of the following questions.

1. Are you the parent of a child currently or formerly enrolled in French Immersion?

Yes          No

2. Please circle the descriptor that best describes your level of French.

Beginner      Semi-      Fluent      Equivalent to      Francophone  
fluent                                   francophone

3. Please circle the descriptor that best describes your school district.

Metro          Urban          Rural

B. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate descriptor.

1. A bilingual francophone from France is a desirable French Immersion teacher candidate.

Strongly      Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
agree                   somewhat                   somewhat                   disagree                   disagree

2. A bilingual francophone from Quebec is a desirable French Immersion teacher candidate.

Strongly      Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
agree                   somewhat                   somewhat                   disagree                   disagree

3. A bilingual anglophone is a desirable French Immersion teacher candidate.

Strongly      Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
agree                   somewhat                   somewhat                   disagree                   disagree

4. A bilingual francophone is a more desirable French Immersion teacher candidate than a bilingual anglophone.

Strongly      Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
agree                   somewhat                   somewhat                   disagree                   disagree

5. A graduate from the French Immersion stream of a university teacher pre-service education program is a desirable French Immersion teaching candidate for the French Immersion program

Strongly      Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
agree                   somewhat                   somewhat                   disagree                   disagree

6. A graduate from the French Core stream of the university teacher pre-service education program is a desirable French Immersion teaching candidate for the French Immersion program.

Strongly      Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
agree                   somewhat                   somewhat                   disagree                   disagree

- 7 . In the event of a teacher shortage, it is acceptable that a school district lower the expected level of language competence required of French Immersion teachers.

Strongly agree    Agree    Agree somewhat    Neutral    Disagree somewhat    Disagree    Strongly disagree

- 8 . It is acceptable to hire someone without training in second language methodology to teach in French Immersion.

Strongly agree    Agree    Agree somewhat    Neutral    Disagree somewhat    Disagree    Strongly disagree

- 9 . If hiring standards are lowered, the French Immersion teacher should be required to improve his or her language skills by completing additional coursework or other activities after being hired.

Strongly agree    Agree    Agree somewhat    Neutral    Disagree somewhat    Disagree    Strongly disagree

- C . Please **rank** the following list of skills and attributes of prospective French Immersion teachers in order of importance. 1= most important 9= least important

_____ fluency in French	_____ spoken and written accuracy
_____ knowledge about francophone culture	_____ enthusiasm
_____ training in second language methodology	_____ pronunciation
_____ classroom management skills	_____ caring attitude
_____ repertoire of teaching strategies	

- D . Please indicate the minimum level French competence you expect of a French Immersion teacher by **checking one** of the following boxes.

- ☐ Level 1 - Speech is halting. Vocabulary is basic, repetitive and error-laden. Makes many grammatical errors although some simple sentences are correct. Accent, pronunciation and intonation are poor.
- ☐ Level 2 - Speech is generally hesitant. Able to get message across with repetition and rephrasing. Grammar is generally correct but makes some errors. Is able to hold basic conversations but cannot discuss topics requiring specialized vocabulary. Errors in pronunciation and accent do not interfere with comprehension.
- ☐ Level 3 - Able to discuss some topics fluently but is often left searching for words. Cannot use complex sentence constructions and level of vocabulary limits the amount of precise information conveyed. Pronunciation is clear though not native-like. While many topics can be discussed, the level of language is not always appropriate to the audience or situation.
- ☐ Level 4 - Speech is generally fluent with occasional hesitations. Makes few written and spoken errors. Makes few pronunciation errors. Vocabulary is sufficient to discuss most topics. The level of language is usually appropriate to the audience.
- ☐ Level 5 - Speech and writing are fluent, free of grammatical errors and equivalent to that of a native speaker. Vocabulary is broad and level of language is always appropriate to the audience.

Do you have further comments you wish to add regarding priorities in the recruitment of French Immersion teachers in British Columbia?

**Appendix E: Unpublished pilot study of pre-service French immersion French proficiency tests at Canadian universities**

University	Oral	Written
<b>University 1</b>	Segmented dictation Reading comprehension - multiple choice Cloze test Editing task Composition - one and a half pages in length	Oral interview - three tasks including the summary of a non-technical text and expression of reaction to the text
	<p>The following is a description of level B (the pass score for the oral component)</p> <p>"Presents information and expresses ideas and opinions in a coherent fashion, however not always with sophistication. Communicates with ease, however, may need some prodding to elicit an adequate speech sample. Explains arguments and defends point of view, however with limited success in performing some functions such as persuading and convincing. May demonstrate an inability to shift register or to perceive a need to shift register. May use some casual speech mannerisms. Comprehension is clearly demonstrated. Pronunciation is clear and accurate. Speed of speech is appropriate to the context. Native-speaker-like errors. No errors impede communication; however they may limit effectiveness of communication" (p. 244).</p> <p><b>Correction Method:</b>            Correction method for oral component: uses evaluation grid developed by Gervais, Laurier, and Paret [Gervais, 1994 #76].</p> <p>"Candidates within 10 points of the pass score (of who failed the composition) are still offered admission but must follow a 39-hour remedial course (known as a cours d'appoint) which focuses on French grammar and writing skills" (Bayliss &amp; Vignola, 2000, p. 221).</p>	
<b>University 2</b>	Cloze test – prepositions Cloze test - subject-verb agreement Cloze test - general comprehension Error correction 300 word composition	15 minute oral interview
	<p><b>Correction Method:</b>            Correction method for oral component: Proctors listen to tape-recording of 15 minute interview and assign ratings of 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (very good) for a series of criteria including: phonology, speed, pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and grammar. The total of all ratings on this sliding scale from 1 to 5 for each criterion are added for a maximum of 60 marks for this component.</p>	

University	Oral	Written
Universities 3, 4 and 5	Dictation Cloze test Short answer Composition	Short role plays Long role play
Universities 3, 4 and 5 (continued)	<b>Correction method:</b> An exhaustive correction grid has been developed over the years by correctors which details which expressions and words are acceptable. New acceptable entries must be found in one of many dictionaries including dictionaries of Quebecois expressions. Because this test is communicative, the range of responses varies widely. Errors are classified according to the competence. The relative importance of each competence is indicated as a percentage of total marks.	
University 6	Written items Read and report on an article. Write a letter of application Listen and respond to a presentation on cassette  <b>Correction method:</b> Scoring rubric categorizes errors. Corrections inserted into recorded responses. Test-takers can listen to their responses and hear inserted corrections	Respond to presentation on cassette
University 7	80 question multiple-choice test dictation	none
University 8	none	none
	<b>Correction method:</b> None This university has French coursework pre-requisites and also relies on the candidates' self-identification as having the requisite level of French to teach in French immersion. Candidates who clearly are not able to cope with the linguistic demands of completing a practicum in a French immersion are re-directed to the English stream.	