

EAL Learners and FSL Programs: Challenges and Possibilities

Bilingualism in a Plurilingual Canada: Research and Implications. Le Centre canadien d'études et de recherche en bilinguisme et aménagement linguistique. Université d'Ottawa

Cynthia Lewis (lewisinc@telus.net)

Wendy Carr (wendy.carr@ubc.ca)

Two Studies/ Common Themes

- **Carr (2006) conducted a case study of the implementation of Intensive French in the Surrey school district (BC)**
- **Lewis (2006, 2008) facilitated 12 case studies of school wide initiatives in literacy in schools with challenging and diverse populations**
- **Themes/ recommendations/ questions**

Questions to consider

- **What are the benefits and challenges of teaching French as a Second Language in educational contexts where students are developing English language literacy skills?**
- **What common successes can be highlighted from these studies and what implications can be drawn for moving forward with second language programs in Canadian contexts today?**

Canada's Bilingualism Ideal: A Case Study of Intensive French in BC (Carr)

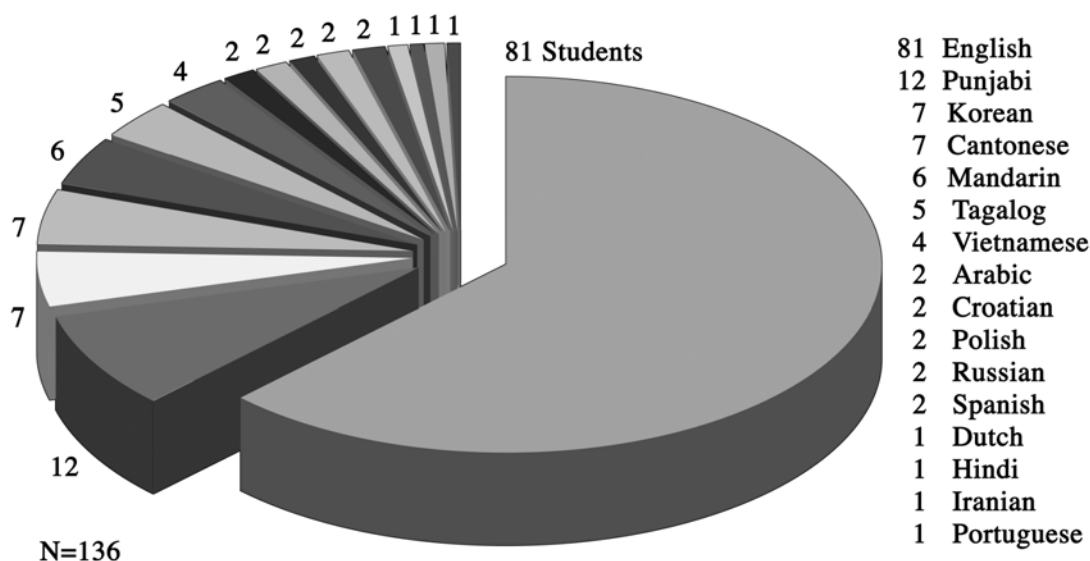
- **Not all parents who enroll their children in language programs of choice do so for idealistic reasons (Olson & Burns, 1983; Hart & Lapkin, 1998); however, a number of EAL parents did want their children to develop a Canadian identity**
- **Language as commodity or means to secure opportunities (Berron, 1998; Dagenais, 2003; Norton, 2000; Heller, 2000, 2001) was operative for many**

Implementation of Intensive French in Surrey, BC



Implementation of Intensive French in Surrey, BC

- large suburban school district - 99 elementary schools - 64 000 students (total)
- half of the students in Intensive French schools speak home languages other than English



Does learning French enhance EAL learner performance in English?

3-year study of 5 schools implementing intensive French (2004-06 & 2007-08) in Surrey, British Columbia

Testing of French oral and written proficiency

**2004-05 - 118 students; 2005-06 - 111 students;
2007-09 - 25 students**

Testing of English cognitive-academic lang. proficiency

2004-05 - 20 EAL students (half IF; half non-IF)	Gr. 5
2005-06 - 24 EAL students	Gr. 5
2007-08 - 21 EAL students	Gr. 6

English proficiency of EAL learners in IF

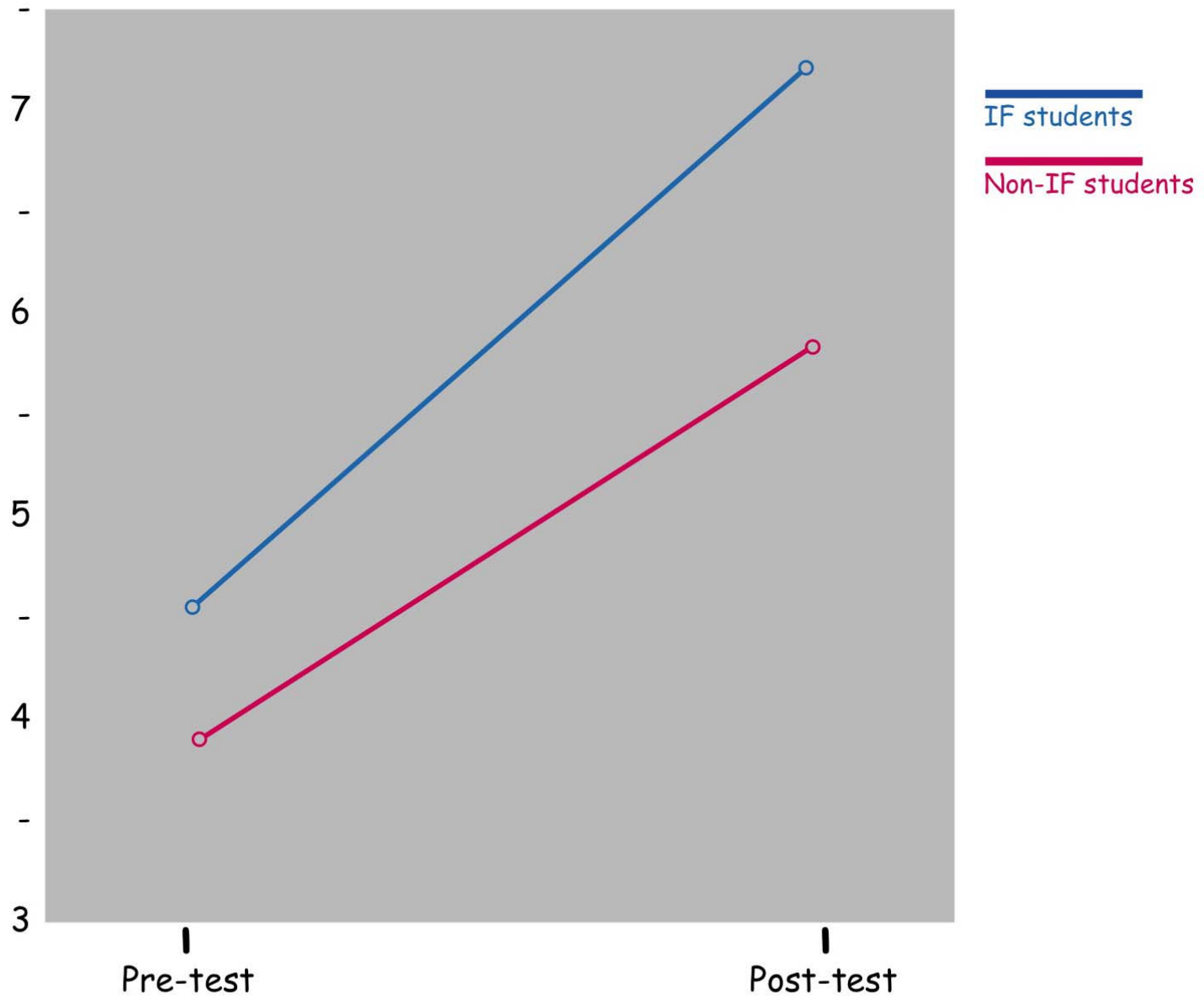
Pre- and post-test Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey

- **oral language (vocabulary, verbal reasoning)**
- **reading-writing (word identification, dictation)**
- **broad English ability (combined measure lang. ability)**

EAL students in IF significantly outperformed EAL students in regular program in oral language and broad ability

EAL students in IF outperformed EAL students in regular program in reading-writing

Oral Language Results (By grade level)



Underlying theories

Dual-iceberg theory and language interdependence: common underlying proficiencies --> first language proficiencies can be transferred to second language learning, and vice versa (e.g., Cummins, 1976, 197; Netten & Germain, 2004; Swain, Lapkin, Rowen & Hart, 1990, Turnbull, Hart & Lapkin, 2000).

Multilinguals have a wider language base and, potentially, a broader base of metalinguistic knowledge (Jessner, 1999).

Elements of Intensive French conducive to literacy learning (in French/English)

- literacy-rich curriculum and pedagogical focus**
- at least 60% of instruction = French Language Arts for first 5 months**
- reduced focus on subject content for 5 months**

Case Studies in School wide Literacy Initiatives: Shared Responsibility and Leadership (Lewis)



Family and Community

Personalized Student
Learning

Collaborative
Professional Action

Focussing on Learning: Sustaining Shared Leadership

- **Structural and philosophical support needs to be visible and tangible at the school and district level.**

Pay attention to relationships. Agree on a few things “we do together”. Make room for diverse contributions.

- **Develop structures for succession and shifting players.**

Deepening Professional Learning and Collaborative Action

- **A spirit of inquiry facilitates the dialogue**
- **Purposeful collaboration is challenging**
- **Risking, rehearsing, refining, reflecting and relating new skills (Earl, Stoll and Fink)**
- **Coaching and “side by side” teaching is effective**

Personalizing Student Learning

“Balanced Literacy”: Reading engagement and reading practice, deep understanding, identity, investment and cultural responsiveness

Enabling classroom assessment practices: quality feedback

Building resilience with at risk students

Focussing on Learning

- **Assessment FOR Learning becomes part of the culture of the school. Consistent yet flexible strategies are applied to instruction and shared with students. Assessments are differentiated, frequent and tied to student learning in real ways.**
- **Professional learning, informed by deeper understandings of how students learn, is visible in changes in instruction.**

Focussing on Learning

- **Personalized interventions, “critical learning paths” and profiles enable student learning, by subgroup and individually.**
- **Flexible groupings and “sharing students” becomes the norm amongst the staff- collaborative ownership**

Strengthening Family and Community Connections

- **The impact of poverty on school achievement has been largely ignored in current educational reforms (Cummins, 2006)**
- **Relationships are the key motivators for learning for students from generational poverty (Payne, 2006)**
- **The quality of support, nurturing, and stimulation depend on the quality of children's day to day experiences where they live and learn (Hertzman & Kohen, 2003)**

Common Themes: What should we be doing more of?

- **Attend to the identities of the students**
- **Begin with strengths and build connections to home languages**
- **Validate and celebrate home and learned languages in language portfolios**
- **Become contributing members of school and district literacy teams**
- **Focus on real life communications**
- **Provide various language delivery models within schools and districts**