Official language bilingualism for English language learners

Opportunity with obstacles
Opportunity

- I like to learn French in Canada because I know English in India. I learn French during presentations and conversation. French is not difficult to learn.* (ESL participant A)
- It’s easy (to learn French) here because we can talk. (ESL participant B)
- It was easy to learn (French) here because…here we learned to speak. (ESL participant C)
- I like to learn French in Canada because I like to learn about Canada. (ESL participant L)

*Quotes taken from the student journals were reproduced here as written by the students.
Opportunity

- It is more advantageous, like in India we know English as a second language, we have that advantage here with the French. French is the second language.” (Parent A)
- We know English as a second language…we have our mother tongue so you see we are interested for French like this. (Parent B)
- We know English as a second language; we have the advantage here with the French. (Parent C)
Opportunity

- Motivation
  - Dagenais and Berron (2001, 1998)
Opportunity

Achievement
- Calman (1988)
- Bild & Swain (1989)
- Mady (2006)
- Carr (2007)
Obstacles

- “We exclude ESL students from French - due to lack of English language knowledge at the time of entry to the school.” (secondary school principal B)
- “They (ESL students) have a second language—English, and they are challenged dealing with one new language.” (secondary school principal C)
- “Learning a third language is difficult when they are already learning a second language.” (head of guidance department B)
- “They have a hard enough time learning English; we don't want to overwhelm them.” (head of guidance department C)
Obstacle

- 53.8 percent (N=7), reported that ESL students do not take French
- 46.2 percent (N=6) indicated that ESL students are sometimes included in French
- 0 percent, no principal indicated that all ESL students were required to take French
Obstacle

- 66.7 percent recognized that ESL students meet with a great deal of success in French
- 41.7% percent indicated that the ESL students met with great success in English classes
Obstacle

Nationally

- The Royal Commission of Bilingualism (1967) and Biculturalism recommended the study of French be limited to Anglophones.
- The Multilingualism Policy (1971), followed by the Multilingualism Act (1988), committed to help immigrants gain one official language, not both.
- The Next Act (2003) strives to double the proportion of secondary school graduates with a functional knowledge in their second official language.
Obstacle

Provinces/Territories

- British Columbia and Ontario allow for exemption
- Other areas do not refer to allophone students studying French in either their French or ESL curriculum documents

- Taaffe, Maguire and Pringle (1996)
Obstacle

- Calman & Daniel (1988)
- Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift (2006)
Discussion

- Beneficial to allophones
  - Benefits to official language bilingualism
  - Meet with success whereas they struggle elsewhere
Discussion

- Beneficial to school communities
- Supports government initiatives
- Beneficial to Canadian society