The Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in an Intensive French as a Second-Language Program: From Theory to Practice

Rhonda Joy

Memorial University

Elizabeth Murphy

Memorial University

Abstract

This paper portrays the activity system of eight classes of Grade 6 children with special educational needs in an Intensive French as a second-language education program. Classroom norms and tools reflected a social-interactionist and social-constructivist approach with scaffolding, social interaction, multiple modes of representing, holistic, cross-curricular, child-centred, active, and meaningful learning. Outcomes of the activity system of the children included basic French communication ability, positive behaviour changes, heightened self-esteem, increased motivation, participation, and engagement. We conclude with implications related to the feasibility, scalability, and sustainability of practices for non-Intensive French classrooms.

Keywords: Special educational, elementary school, Intensive French, inclusion, Activity theory, social-constructivism

Résumé

Cet article décrit le système d'activité de huit classes d'élèves de 6e année ayant des besoins éducatifs particuliers dans un programme intensif de français langue seconde. Les normes et les outils pédagogiques utilisés en classe ont reflété une approche socio-interactionniste et socio-constructiviste mêlée d'échafaudage, d'interactions sociales, de modes de représentation multiples, et d'un apprentissage actif, signicatif, holistique, interdisciplinaire et centré sur l'enfant. Les objectifs d'apprentissage du système d'activité des enfants incluent les capacités de communication de base en français, les changements positifs de comportement, le renforcement de l'estime de soi, l'accroissement de la motivation, de la participation et de l'engagement. Nous concluons avec les implications liées à la faisabilité, l'extensibilité et la pérennité des pratiques pour des classes de français non-intensif.

Mots-clés: éducation spécialisée, école primaire, français intensif, inclusion, théorie de l'activité, socio-constructivisme

The Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in an Intensive Second-Language Program: From Theory to Practice

The term inclusive education, although theoretically and pragmatically imprecise, represents a move to internationalize the language of special education (Slee, 2006). It is an "elusive and much contested" term (Mowat, 2010, p.631) with little shared understanding of its meaning (Smith & Barr, 2008). There is, however, a shared understanding of the goal of inclusive education, that it is to be a means of improving educational participation and opportunities for all, "especially those at risk for marginalisation and social exclusion" (Reicher, 2010, p. 214). The inclusion philosophy is designed to better appreciate and accommodate the diversity in schools (Salend, 2001) and beyond the school to include students in society in general (Curcic, 2009).

Global interest in inclusive education by organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and the World Bank is based on the premise that inclusion is a human right (Crawford, 2008), or what Slee (2006) refers to as an ideological commitment, a way of understanding the world and education's role within it (p. 112). The Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) called for reform of schools to support inclusion and the accommodation of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions.

One recommendation of the Statement is the dissemination of examples of good practice. However, there is no agreement among researchers on what actually constitute inclusive practices (Curcic, 2009). In general, inclusive education is a relatively young field without an established base of empirical research (Dyson, Howes, & Roberts, 2002) and without many attempts to present in-depth analyses of inclusive classroom processes (Nilholm & Alm, 2010). Yet, it is necessary to study these processes and how teachers establish inclusion in order to help overcome more general barriers to educational and social inclusion (Nilholm & Alm).

The study we report on in this paper provides an opportunity to focus on inclusion in a unique context. More importantly, it provides an illustration of what inclusive practices might look like and what they might result in. The context in which we studied inclusion was a five-month, three-hour-per-day Canadian program of intensive second-language learning called Intensive French (IF). We focused on eight classes of Grade 6 IF in which students are included in the program, regardless of whether they do or do not have special education needs (SEN). During the 2010-2011 school year, 25 of the 52 schools offering IF in Newfoundland and Labrador included all students in their Grade 6 IF classes. There were no non-IF classrooms even though the schools may have multiple classes of Grade 6.

To gain insight into practices in that context, we focused on what Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) referred to as "the broader context of the entire culture of learning" (p. 23) including cultural artefacts and tools, social relations, rules, division of labour, and communities (p. 22). We adopted an Activity Theory (AT) framework as a lens to understand the context. AT investigates human activity as a system that is "object oriented, collective, and culturally mediated" (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 19).

Activity systems include interacting, mediating components of subject, object (motive of activity), instruments (tools and mediating artefacts), division of labour, community, rules, and outcomes (Engeström, 1987). The subject is at the centre of the activity and has a particular object or motive for engaging in the activity, the outcome of which is mediated by all the other components of the system. Community members are those who share in the activity's object

while the division of labour refers to how activity within the system is proportioned or regulated. Rules (also referred to as norms and conventions) can be explicit or implicit and serve to regulate the activity while tools, which can also be symbolic such as language, enable or constrain activity.

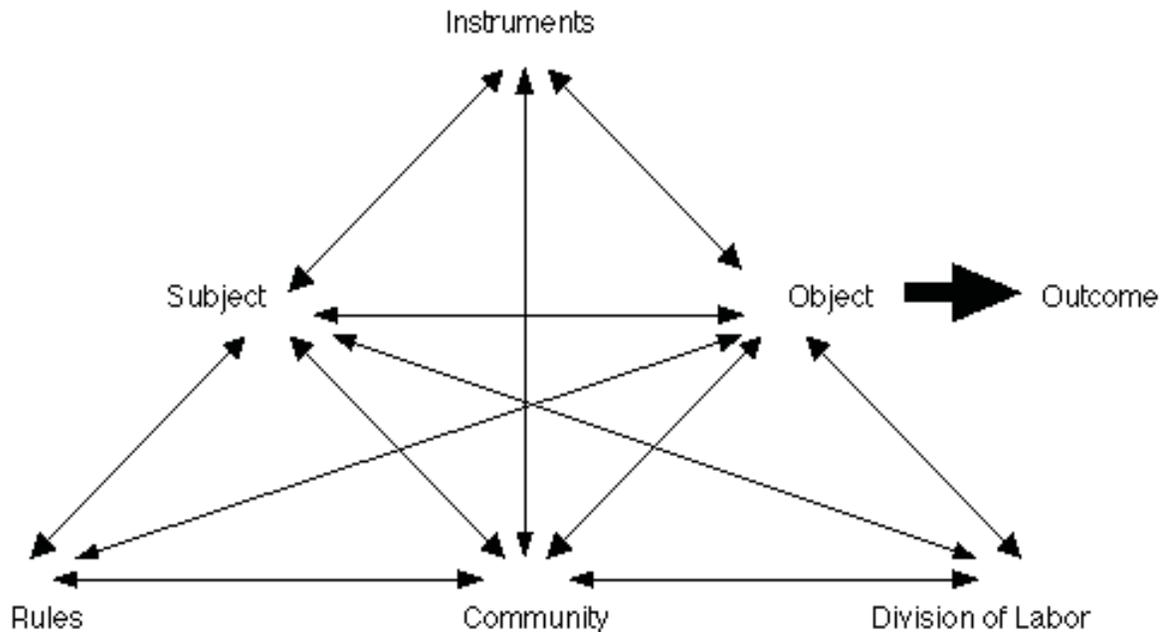Activity systems are typically represented using a triangle as follows:

Figure 1. Activity System Components (Engeström, 1987).

The purpose of the study reported on in this paper was to portray the activity system (Engeström, 1987) of children with SEN in eight IF classrooms. Portraying an activity system is a way of making sense of and gaining insight into a context. For a concise summary of how researchers have conducted activity systems' analyses in educational contexts, see Yamagata-Lynch (2010). As Yamagata-Lynch explains, one of the reasons activity systems' analysis is used is to describe real-world learning situations. In this paper, we describe children with SEN learning in a program that is not designed for them as children with SEN, but for children learning a second language using an intensive approach.

We begin with an overview of studies that have adopted an AT perspective to the analysis of inclusion. We also provide a brief overview of the IF program as it is operating in Canada. The methods' section describes recruitment, data collection as well as how we conducted an AT analysis using a protocol designed for this purpose. We present findings in relation to the seven components of the activity system. The discussion situates the activity system in a broader theoretical context of social constructivism. The paper ends with an outline of limitations, implications and suggestions for future research.

Activity Theory and Inclusion

There have been a limited number of studies using an AT framework to examine inclusive education. Many of these adopt a theoretical perspective rather than an empirical

perspective. Daniels and Cole (2002) used AT to analyse educational services for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). They argued that present-day tensions with EBD services and programs reflect historical roots and that the structure of the activity system has remained unchanged over time. As a result, for example, although collaborative approaches might best suit EBD, such approaches are difficult because of schools' traditional subject-specialization and "culture of professional individualism" (p. 323).

Leadbetter (2005) explained how consideration of the socio-cultural context of teaching and learning practices can help understand them. She argued that the regular meeting of educational psychologists and teachers can be seen as an activity system and that educational psychologists need to be grounded in theories that inform their practice. Flynn (2005) used an AT, socio-cultural perspective to analyze barriers to inclusion for children with autistic spectrum disorders. She emphasized the important role of social processes, participation, and context in mediating inclusion.

Edwards and Fox (2005) described how AT informed the ongoing national evaluation of a program called The Children's Fund, a program of multi-agency children's preventative services designed to disrupt "trajectories of social exclusion" (NECF, 2004, p. 51). Case studies of partnerships were coded using AT to help uncover the object of different partners' activity. Others have relied on AT to examine how policy knowledge is mediated by AT components or rules, division of labour, community, subject, or object (see Canary & McPhee, 2009). Pearson (2009) used AT as a lens to understand teachers' conceptualization of "disability" and "special education."

Within the literature on IF programs (see Netten & Germain, 2004), there has been little attention to the inclusion of children with SEN. In our review of the literature for this paper, we uncovered no activity system analyses of contexts in which children with SEN were learning in specialized programs that were not designed specifically for purposes of inclusion. The study presented in this paper fills an important gap in the literature in terms of analyses of inclusive classroom processes and in dissemination of examples of good practice. The results of studies such as this one can help overcome barriers to educational inclusion.

An Overview of Intensive French Programs

IF programs are typically delivered in Grades 5 or 6 (at the end of the elementary grades) over a five-month period, normally September to January, with approximately 65% of the school day taught in French (Netten & Germain, 2004). "Mathematics and some other subjects frequently taught by specialists, such as physical education, art, and music, continue to be taught in English …"(Netten & Germain, 2008, p. 759). The curriculum for the remaining five months of the school year is compacted (Netten & Germain, 2005).

The increase in French instruction requires a reduction in time allotted to other subjects such as social studies, health, and religion. Time for English language arts may be reduced by as much as 50%, yet "all learning outcomes for the grade are maintained for all subjects" (Netten & Germain, 2004, p.13). The reduction in time allotments is possible because of curriculum compacting, language transfer and a "literacy based approach to second language learning" (Netten & Germain, p.14). This approach involves interactive teaching strategies, group work, and an authentic and integrated focus on implicit language learning with language as a means of communication (Netten & Germain).

The IF program is rooted in a Vygotskian conception of intellectual development, which holds that cognitive development is not compartmentalized according to subjects and that social

interaction increases intellectual development (Netten & Germain, 2004). The program is based on findings that link achievement with time spent learning the language (Swain, 1981; Carroll, 1975) and with intense (Lightbown & Spada, 1993; 1989) and authentic (Swain, 1981; Stern, 1976) exposure to the language.

Method

Ethics

We obtained permission to conduct the study from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) Memorial University, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. We then applied for and obtained informed consent from the School District. Finally, the principal of each school and individual participants provided consent.

Procedures

To select the schools for inclusion in the study, we needed to first determine which schools within the district were non-optional (i.e., all Grade 6 classes participating). Once we had selected the four schools, a research assistant contacted the principal to let him or her know that an information package would be sent to the school.

Interviews took place in the school, were conducted individually, and were audio-taped. They lasted approximately one hour each. They were conducted between February – June, 2010 (i.e., once the five-month Intensive French was finished for the year). The research assistant who interviewed participants was a former teacher. Her experience in the school system helped establish a social context and rapport with the interviewees.

Participants

Three of the four schools participating in the study were K-6 schools. One was a K-8 school. One was an inner city school, whereas the others were rural. The IF program had been in place in these schools for between seven to ten years. None of the schools offered a French Immersion program, but all offered a regular Core French program. One school offered an enriched French program for Grades 7-8. Each school had two IF classes for a total of eight participating classes. The four schools ranged in size from 250-430. IF class sizes ranged from 18-29. The four schools were selected based on their larger school population and the fact that they had two or more Grade 6, IF classes in each school.

Participants included eight IF teachers, four special-needs teachers, three guidance counsellors, four administrators from four non-optional IF schools within one school district in rural and urban areas. We chose these individuals as key informants (Spradley, 1979) who would have inside, contextual knowledge of the inclusion of children with SEN in IF classrooms. We did not include parents as part of the interviews because our focus was not on individual children. The eight teachers had between one to seven years' teaching experience in IF. The IF teachers had backgrounds in French or held French degrees. The participating special-education teachers, guidance counsellors, and administrators did not speak French. All eight IF teachers had received a minimum of one-to-two-week institutes and ongoing professional development in IF.

Interview Guide

We organized the interview guide into three parts. Part 1 was designed to obtain information about the school, staff, students, community, and the IF program (e.g., student

population, staff size, IF class size, community size, teacher professional development, and experience). Part 2 focused on the organization of IF in the school and a typical day in an IF classroom. Part 3 focused on interviewees' perceptions of the positive outcomes experienced by the SEN children in the IF program. We also asked participants to identify factors they considered to be contributing to the outcomes.

        In the tradition of qualitative interviewing, the epistemological perspective was constructivist. According to this perspective, concern is with deriving interpretations and meaning-making as opposed to obtaining facts or retrieving information (Warren, 2001). Although we used the same interview guide with all interviewees across all four sites, the interviewer engaged the interviewee in additional discussion, probing, and clarifying. In this sense, interviews were semi-structured (Patton, 2002).

Analysis

        We transcribed the interviews verbatim and in their entirety including the interviewer's comments, probes, and interview questions. We aggregated the data and grouped them by interview question (e.g., we grouped into one category all responses that included references to teaching approaches). We then reduced the data to eliminate the interviewer's comments, digressions or expressions such as, "You know what I mean?" Next, we broke the responses into units of analysis. For units of analysis, we used a unit of meaning or "a statement or a continuous set of statements, which convey one identifiable idea" (Aviv, 2001, p. 59). We used open coding to assign labels (codes) to the units. Open coding involves "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). An example of a unit of meaning from our study is as follows:

> *When they speak French, we give them the token and then they save up the tokens and then at the end of the month we have a little auction. So it's just kind of an incentive for them to speak.*

We labelled this unit "incentives." We assigned the same label to other units with similar meanings. After we had labelled all units, we grouped together those with similar labels.

        Following the inductive analysis, we assigned units deductively to one of the seven components of the activity system: subject, object, rules, community, division of labour, instruments, and outcome. For example, we grouped all units labelled "incentives" under instruments. Once we had assigned all labels, we deleted duplicate units until only unique units of meaning remained under each category. We created and relied on the following protocol for the deductive analysis.

Table 1.
Protocol for Categorizing Units of Data.

Component	Guiding question	Possible examples
Subject	Whose activity system is being portrayed? What are their characteristics?	12, 13 years old, types of special needs, e.g., autistic.
Object	What is the problem space at which activity is directed? Why are the subjects engaged in the activity?	To learn.
Instruments	What tools or instruments mediate activity in these classrooms?	English, French language, strategies, teaching methods.
Division of labour	How are tasks of the activity divided in terms of power and status?	Teacher-centered Special-education teacher-centered , Student-centered.
Rules	What are the implicit or explicit rules, norms and conventions that afford or constrain activity in the IF classrooms?	No speaking English. French for 60% until February.
Community	Who are the individuals who share the same object?	Parent, principal, guidance counsellor, special education teacher.
Outcomes	What are the intended or unintended outcomes or results for the subjects of being in the IF classrooms?	Inclusion

Reporting

We took care in reporting results to ensure anonymity. Given the small number of schools involved, we could not ensure confidentiality. We informed participants of this limitation. However, to promote confidentiality as much as possible, we aggregated all responses. We avoided specific references to, for example, "School 1." Nor did we indicate if a particular comment was from a principal, guidance counsellor, teacher, or special-education teacher. Although interviewees may have included anecdotes about particular children as part of their response, we did not report these in order to ensure confidentiality.

The findings that we report in the next section represent an aggregation of interviewees' comments. Our goal in reporting was to retain, as much as possible, the actual words used by the interviewees (e.g., "It's like they're on more even playing field with their peers"). We rely on the present tense in order to remain closer to the language of the interviewees. We present all units grouped under one of the seven components of the activity system: subject, object, rules, community, division of labour, instruments, and outcome.

Findings: The Activity System of Children with SEN in Intensive French

Subject

The 31 children with SEN in the eight Grade 6, IF urban and rural classrooms of our study included males and females aged 11-12 years old who receive support from a special-education teacher. Their documented needs included the following: cognitive delay, Autism, speech impediment, Attention Deficit Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, Down's Syndrome, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. In addition to students with identified exceptionalities, the IF classrooms included a number of students who were reading and writing significantly below grade level.

The students may have exhibited behavioural problems or have had social issues in the past. In addition, they know their classmates are moving along a lot faster than they are and that affects self-esteem. They were labelled when they were young. They may be fearful of being laughed at or ridiculed. These students started out with a gap in their learning when they were in kindergarten, but by the time they reached Grade 6, the gap had widened.

Object

In the IF classrooms, children with SEN and regular students are all working together to try and reach one common goal. They all want to learn to speak French. They have to do this in a three-hour-per-day intense schedule for a five-month period. In some ways, students do not have the choice to study French in this way. IF is offered based on unanimous consent. If a parent does not want their child in the program, the school is obligated to honour that objection. But consent is unanimous because IF has become part of the fabric and culture of the school.

Instruments/Tools

Teachers use a variety of techniques and strategies including a set routine. They rely extensively on modelling, scaffolding, repetition, providing examples, and use of partners. To support speaking or writing, students make use of scaffolds such as word walls, phrase starters, gesturing, brainstorming, pictures, oral prompts, and dictionary binders. Teachers also use SmartBoards^{TM} and rely on fun games, on art, and scrap-books. Classroom resources are bright and colourful with frequent use of pictures to accompany text.

Students learn cues and strategies to help decode and comprehend the French language. Modelling is a common technique, particularly for writing. The modelling may be gradually reduced over time to encourage independence. In addition to modelling, teachers repeat themselves. There are always examples or a cushion students can rely on that will help them get through the activity. The program is set up to ensure students meet with success early on, and offers opportunities for students to feel comfortable in their own skin.

Music is another tool on which the teachers rely. There are a lot of songs and the children are singing ever day. The songs motivate, break the ice, and get students' voices moving in French. Songs are used because students learn easily through songs. They might be combined with actions to help language become concrete. The songs might also be combined with cards or other visuals and students may be asked to illustrate their understanding of the song.

Drama, performance, and frequent presentations in front of class are also used as tools to help students step out of themselves and for practicing personal development such as getting up with others. Students might participate in role-playing skits, French café (one plays waiter and the other a client), or they may be involved in a Halloween play for all the classrooms in French. Teachers use incentives such as a token system or bingo chips to reward students for speaking

French and they cash them in for an auction in French with trinkets that they might enjoy. Textbooks are not used. Students have "Baggie Books" (that can be stored in a small plastic bag). These are easy readers in French that the students take home with them each day. They are storybooks similar to what Grade 1 or primary children would have in English.

Division of Labour

The eight IF classrooms rely on extensive use of dynamic, ever-changing, closely-knit groups that maximize opportunities for all children to interact. Groups are designed so that the children can help each other but also to make them feel like they are not separated and isolated. Groups may be small or simply involve working with a partner to have a child to buddy up with and to be supported in their learning. Group and partner work is also designed to promote social skills. Because students are working in groups, they have to get along. The teachers will group a child with SEN with a student who can pull them along and make them feel good about themselves. Students with SEN are closely monitored.

Rules

The IF classrooms in the study rely on a different way of teaching that is not structured the same as every other year. It is a dynamic classroom where you don't see books on desks and where students are learning without knowing that they're learning and having fun and learning at the same time. Teachers do not use a subject approach with compartmentalized learning. Their approach is holistic, cross-curricular, resource-based whereby they integrate themes across the various subject areas, similar to what they would be doing in the primary grades. As a result, students do not know whether they are doing religion, social studies, or language arts.

Learning is activity-based and involves hands-on projects. Children are expected to be getting out of their seats. There are frequent changes of pace with emphases on different skills so that students are not sitting and writing all day. Classes are highly conversational with a lot of talking and discussion. All students have to do presentations and cannot get away with hiding behind someone else's work on the final presentation. Classrooms use different ways of visualizing and representing.

Students are all working from a basic level, on the same playing field, at the beginning of language. All are bringing home Baggie Books so that they are all starting at the same level. For children with SEN, this approach represents an opportunity to start over. It also means that they are not expected to read at a certain level. Classroom conversation focuses on themes that are of interest to children, their likes and dislikes, and family. If the topic is not of interest to the class, then the teacher can drop it. Attention is paid to multi-intelligences, different modalities, learning styles, ways of representing, and types of learners.

The language of instruction is French. Language is learned in a more natural way, more like how we would learn our first language. The approach to language teaching is meaningful and authentic. The classroom atmosphere is positive with teachers giving frequent encouragement to students. Students have freedom to make choices as to what kind of activity they are going to be involved in. Teachers have the freedom to create their own curriculum and to explore new ways of teaching. Students are asked to talk as opposed to being told to be quiet.

Community

The program is viewed very positively by the community and is an accepted part of the culture of the schools. French is important in the schools in general. The IF students participate in whole-school activities such as performing a Halloween play in French for all the classrooms.

The IF students also participate in school–wide announcements in French. IF students deliver in French parts of some school-wide assemblies. In general, the schools try to provide students with as many opportunities as possible to speak publicly in French.

Encouragement, support, and trust come from the administration. The principals are very much in favour of the IF program. In addition, there is school-wide support for the program and for the children with SEN enrolled in it. The teachers who work with the children with SEN always make a big deal with them. All students are held in high esteem and no one is made to feel inferior to anybody else.

Gym and music teachers share in inclusionary practices so that children with SEN are not left in the corner to themselves, but brought out. Teachers work together as a team, plan together and support each other. Support comes also from District and Department of Education levels in terms of opportunities for professional development and consultation with other teachers. Many parents volunteer, know each other, and are supportive of the program.

Outcomes

When they complete the program, many students with SEN can do basic communication in the French language and have a positive attitude towards French. Some of the children with SEN would normally have been taken out of the French program but, after participation in IF, have more success in French than in other academic areas. In general, the children with SEN make a lot of progress in a short period of time and are less focused on their weaknesses. They may jump two grade levels in terms of their reading and writing, although their level may still be seriously below Grade 6 outcomes.

The children with SEN in IF are less conscious of the differences between them and their peers, feel like all other students in the class, like they're on more even playing field with their peers. The discrepancy between them and those without SEN is much smaller, the gaps not as obvious. They are more motivated, more confident, more comfortable, and have a more positive attitude about themselves and their abilities. They make more effort in class, don't shy away as much as they did in the past, come out of their shell, are engaged and more actively involved in the learning process. They want to be the leader of the game. The frustration level and anxiety levels are not there. Behavioural problems are fewer.

The children with SEN take pride in speaking French and feel a sense of accomplishment. They are not afraid to make mistakes because they know everybody is making them and the fear of being laughed at or ridiculed is not there because they are all trying. They are more risk-takers because everybody's risking-taking. They do not feel that they have to be singled out as much and want to participate and volunteer. The positive changes in their self-esteem affect the entire social scene.

Figure 2 presents a synthesis of the activity system of children with SEN in eight IF classrooms.
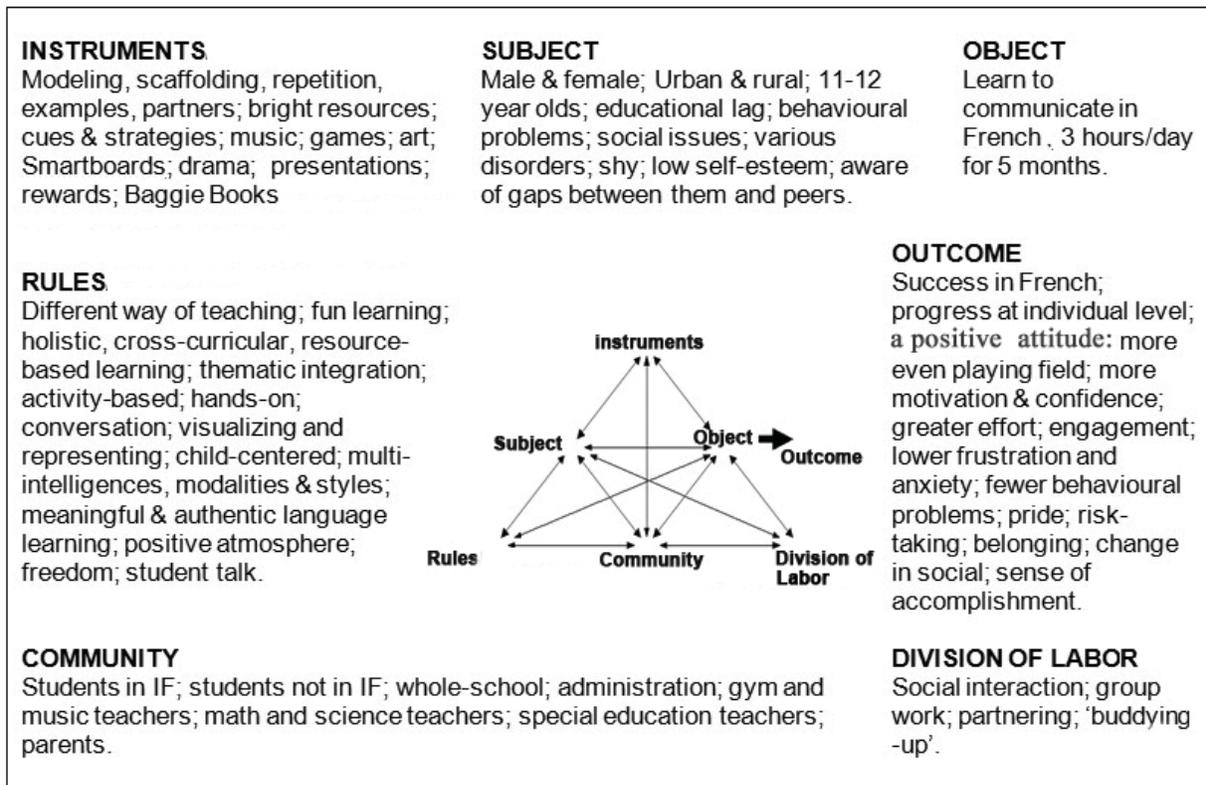
INSTRUMENTS
Modeling, scaffolding, repetition, examples, partners; bright resources; cues & strategies; music; games; art; Smartboards; drama; presentations; rewards; Baggie Books

SUBJECT
Male & female; Urban & rural; 11-12 year olds; educational lag; behavioural problems; social issues; various disorders; shy; low self-esteem; aware of gaps between them and peers.

OBJECT
Learn to communicate in French . 3 hours/day for 5 months.

RULES
Different way of teaching; fun learning; holistic, cross-curricular, resource-based learning; thematic integration; activity-based; hands-on; conversation; visualizing and representing; child-centered; multi-intelligences, modalities & styles; meaningful & authentic language learning; positive atmosphere; freedom; student talk.

OUTCOME
Success in French; progress at individual level; a positive attitude: more even playing field; more motivation & confidence; greater effort; engagement; lower frustration and anxiety; fewer behavioural problems; pride; risk-taking; belonging; change in social; sense of accomplishment.

COMMUNITY
Students in IF; students not in IF; whole-school; administration; gym and music teachers; math and science teachers; special education teachers; parents.

DIVISION OF LABOR
Social interaction; group work; partnering; 'buddying-up'.

Figure 2. Synthesis of the activity system of children with SEN in eight IF classrooms.

Discussion: From Theory to Practice

The use of Activity Theory and the portrayal of the activity systems of children with SEN provided a lens to view their learning in an interconnected way. That lens offered insights into how the components such as norms and tools combined to result in positive outcomes for students' learning. The norms, division of labour, community, and tools reflected a social-constructivist and social-interactionist approach to learning (see Bruner, 1973; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) and resulted in positive outcomes. It was not specific interventions designed for the children with SEN but a theoretical approach (i.e., social–constructivist) that led to the positive outcomes. The results of the study provide support for what Mallory and New (1994) refer to as a "social constructivism as a theoretical framework for inclusion..." (p. 325).

Mallory and New describe such an approach as one that that emphasizes the influence of the social context, social activity, and children's contributions to their learning. Using social constructivism as a framework for inclusion requires, as the authors explain, that the classroom function as a community of learners: that social relations be the catalyst for learning, that content and context be linked through inclusive curriculum, and that processes for feedback and assessment be authentic and emotionally supportive. In sum, the focus is not on "deficits" but on the creation of "social opportunities" (p. 334). Unfortunately, as Mallory and New argue, "There is no 'blueprint' for social constructivist teaching" (p. 334). We argue, however, that the context of teaching and learning illustrated in this paper provides a sample blueprint or illustration. In addition, it provides insights into the types of positive outcomes that can result from teaching using social constructivism.

In terms of the outcomes, we can conclude that these appeared to be largely at the affective as opposed to the cognitive level. Avramidis (2010) argues in favour of avoiding children's marginalization, loneliness, low social status, and social rejection through social interaction and peer activities. The outcomes and approaches in this study offer support for his argument. In addition, the positive outcomes resulted not from any individual factor, but from the complex interaction and combination of elements in the activity system. One of these is the emphasis on cross-curricular learning and teaching. As MacMath, Roberts, Wallace, and Chi (2010) observed, "When students have repeatedly experienced academic failure it is important for teachers to provide activities that challenge these negative experiences … curriculum integration may present an opportunity for teachers to provide positive academic experiences" (p. 93).

Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

One of the recommendations of a Canadian report on inclusive education (Crawford, 2005) is that model schools be created "that are communities of learners" (p. 15). Mallory and New (1994) also argued in favour of "classrooms as communities" (p. 322). In the IF classrooms in this study, the common object or the shared goal of all wanting to learn French in this intensive context—combined with the high levels of social interaction and conversation—provide an example of how those communities might be formed. Crawford's report also recommends the dissemination of inclusive education 'success stories.' This paper fulfils that purpose.

The study's scope excluded observations of individual students and their teachers, not only because of ethical issues but because exploration is a preferred approach in this context about which little has thus been reported on in the literature. Future studies might include observations for purposes of triangulation and could also include interviews with students for an additional measure of the outcomes. While our focus was limited to only eight of the 25 non-optional IF classrooms schools in the province and eight classrooms, we reached saturation in the sense that there was repetition from interviewee to interviewee of the same comments and responses.

In spite of the limitations of scale of our study, we might hypothesize that the activity systems of children with SEN in other schools, in other provinces, would be similar to what we have identified and described in this paper. The similarity would be due to the philosophy and practice of the IF program as it is articulated in the literature by Netten and Germain (2004), the founders of the program. It is a model of good practice: cross-curricular, active, meaningful, activity-based, child-centred, social, and interactive communicative learning (i.e., social-constructivist and social-interactionist). There is ample evidence in the literature, theoretical and empirical, regarding the value of the latter and former approaches to teaching and learning.

Elsewhere in Canada, (e.g., New Brunswick, Ontario, and Saskatchewan), some IF classes are organized to include all students. However, our study does not provide sufficient evidence to confirm that it should be compulsory. What it does is point to is a need for research on children with SEN in programs and contexts such as the one described in this study. Questions that might be investigated are: What outcomes continue to have positive effects on children once they transition out of such contexts? How can some or all of the positive outcomes be sustained throughout the remainder of their schooling, i.e., how can they continue to be risk-takers, to feel like they are on an even playing field with other children, or that they are fitting in

socially? As of 2009, IF was operating in nine Canadian provinces and two territories (Carr, 2009). Therefore, there are many other contexts in which IF could be studied.

In terms of implications for practice, teachers interested in inclusive classrooms might benefit from the types of professional development that IF teachers receive or from observations of these classrooms or discussions with the IF teachers. Teachers in (non-IF) second-language classrooms might also benefit from similar exposure to IF approaches in order to promote greater inclusion in their classrooms. In terms of inclusive practices, peer-interaction, scaffolding, oral communication, and multiple ways of visualizing and representing are just some of the teaching approaches that might transfer to other contexts.

Future research may also consider issues of scalability, feasibility, and sustainability of the inclusive practices. How does a teacher in a regular (non-IF) classroom bring about the 'levelling' that occurred in the four classrooms of this study because children were going back to the beginnings of language? In terms of sustainability of the positive outcomes, at what point do the students with SEN plateau or simply become used to the novelty and then revert to past ways of behaving and performing? The IF program lasted only five months. Would the outcomes be the same if such a program continued for more than a year or might SEN students' engagement and motivation wane? Are the practices, particularly those related to cross-curricular teaching, feasible in other non-IF classrooms and at other levels?

References

Aviv, R. (2001). Educational performance of ALN via content analysis. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 4*(2), 53-72. Retrieved from http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v4n2/pdf/v4n2_aviv.pdf

Avramidis, E. (2010). Social relationships of pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream primary class: Peer group membership and peer-assessed social behaviour. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 25*(4), 413-429. doi:10.1080/08856257.2010.513550

Bruner, J. S. (1973). *The relevance of education*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Canary, H. E., & McPhee, R. D. (2009). The mediation of policy knowledge: An interpretive analysis of intersecting activity systems. *Management Communication Quarterly, 23*(2), 147–187. doi:10.1177/0893318909341409

Carr, W. (2009). Intensive French in British Columbia: Student and parent perspectives and English as additional language (EAL) student performance**. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *65*(5), 787-815. doi:10.3138/cmlr.65.5.787

Carroll, J. B. (1975). Research problems concerning the teaching of foreign or second languages to younger children. In Stern, H. H. (Ed.), *Foreign Languages in Primary Education* (pp. 94-109). London: Oxford University Press.

Crawford, C. (2008). *Defining a rights based framework: Advancing inclusion of students with disabilities – A summary of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies' 2008 National Forum*. Retrieved from http://www.inclusiveeducation.ca/documents/CASHRAForum2008FinalReport.pdf

Crawford, C. (2005). *Inclusive education in Canada – key issues and directions for the future*. Report based on the Canadian Association for Community Living's National Summit on Inclusive Education of November 2004. L'Institut Roeher Institute. Retrieved from http://www.inclusiveeducation.ca/documents/ROEHER-STATE-OF-2005.pdf

Curcic, S. (2009). Inclusion in PK-12: An international perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *13*(5), 517-538. doi:10.1080/13603110801899585

Daniels, H., & Cole, T. (2002). The development of provision for young people with emotional and behavioral difficulties: An activity theory analysis. *Oxford Review of Education, 28*(2&3), 311-330. doi:10.1080/03054980220143441a

Dyson, A., Howes, A., & Roberts, B. (2002). A systematic review of the effectiveness of school-level actions for promoting participation by all students. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Retrieved from http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=iUbcZoMxppc%3d&tabid=813&mid=1951&language=en-US

Edwards, A., & Fox, C. (2005). Using activity theory to evaluate a complex response to social exclusion. *Educational and Child Psychology, 22*(1), 50-60. Retrieved from http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download$.cfm?file_uuid=3B4D538E-1143-DFD0-7EDC-35D2A83CF028

Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research.* Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit Oy.

Engeström, Y., & Miettinen, R. (1999). Introduction. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R. L. Punamäki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 1-18). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flynn, S. A. (2005). A sociocultural perspective on an inclusive framework for assessment of children with autistic spectrum disorders within mainstream settings. *Educational & Child Psychology, 22*(1). 40-50. Retrieved from http://www.bps.org.uk/downloadfile.cfm?file_uuid=3B4D538E-1143-DFD0-7EDC-35D2A83CF028&ext=pdf

Gutierrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 19-25. doi:10.3102/0013189X032005019

Leadbetter, J. (2005). Activity theory as a conceptual framework and analytical tool within the practice of educational psychology. *Educational & Child Psychology, 22*(1), 18-28. Retrieved from http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download$.cfm?file_uuid=3B4D538E-1143-DFD0-7EDC-35D2A83CF028

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (1993). *How languages are learned.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lightbown, P., & Spada, N. (1989). Intensive ESL programs in Quebec primary schools. *TESOL Canada, 7*(1), 11–32. Retrieved from http://www.tesl.ca

MacMath, S., Roberts, J., Wallace, J., & Chi, X. (2010). Curriculum integration and at-risk students: A Canadian case study examining student learning and motivation. *British Journal of Special Education*, *37*, 87-94. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2009.00454.x

Mallory, B. L., & New, R. S. (1994). Social constructivist theory and principles of inclusion: Challenges for early childhood special education. *The Journal of Special Education, 28*(3), 322-337. doi:10.1177/002246699402800307

Mowat, J. (2010). Inclusion of pupils perceived as experiencing social and emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD): Affordances and constraints. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(6), 631-648. doi:10.1080/13603110802626599

NECF. (2004). *Developing collaboration in preventative services for children and young people: The first annual report of NECF*. London: DfES (also at www.ne-cf.org).

Netten, J., & Germain, G. (2008). The future of Intensive French in Canada. The *Canadian Modern Language Review, 65*(5), 757-786. doi:10.1353/cml.0.0077

Netten, J., & Germain, C. (2005). Pedagogy and second language learning: Lessons learned from intensive French. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *8*(2), 183-210. Retrieved from http://www.aclacaal.org/Revue/vol-8-no2-art-netten-germain.pdf

Netten, J., & Germain, C. (2004). Theoretical and research foundations of intensive French. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 60*(3), 275-294.

Nilholm, C., & Alm, B. (2010). An inclusive classroom? A case study of inclusiveness, teacher strategies, and children's experiences. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 25*(3), 239-252. doi:10.1080/08856257.2010.492933

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Pearson, S. (2009). Using activity theory to understand prospective teachers' attitudes to and construction of special educational needs and/or disabilities. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(4), 559-568. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.011

Reicher, H. (2010). Building inclusive education on social and emotional learning: Challenges and perspectives─a review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(3), 213-246. doi:10.1080/13603110802504218

Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Salend, S. J. (2001). *Creating inclusive classrooms: Effective and reflective practices for all students* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Slee, R. (2006). Limits to and possibilities for educational reform. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *10*(2/3), 109-119. doi:10.1080/13603110600578372

Smith, R., & Barr, S. (2008). Towards educational inclusion in a contested society: From critical analysis to creative action. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 12*(4), 401-422. doi:10.1080/13603110601145775

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Stern, H. H., Swain, M., & Maclean, L. D. (1976). *French programs: Some major issues. Evaluation and synthesis of studies related to the experimental programs for the teaching of French as a second language in the Carleton-Ottawa School Boards.* Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Swain, M. (1981). Time and timing in bilingual education. *Language Learning, 31*(1), 1-15. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1981.tb01369.x

UNESCO. (1994). The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education. In *World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality*. Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June, 1994. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/medien/Dokumente/Bildung/Salamanca_Declaration.pdf

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warren, C. (2001). Qualitative interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 83-101). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Yamagata-Lynch, Lisa, (2010). Activity Systems Analysis Methods. Understanding Complex
    Learning Environments. New York: Springer.