Starting English early with songs and stories:

Are there measurable benefits in oral performance at the end of elementary school?

Hélène Duguay

A Thesis

in the

Department of Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 31, 2015

© Hélène Duguay, 2015

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Hélène Duguay

Entitled: Starting English early with songs and stories:

             Are there measurable benefits in oral performance at the end of elementary school?

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts, Specialization Applied Linguistics

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____Chair
  Dr. Sarita Kennedy

_____Examiner
  Dr. Laura Collins

_____Examiner
  Dr. Marlise Horst

_____Supervisor
  Dr. Joanna White

Approved by _____
             Dr. Richard Schmid, Chair of Department

             _____
             André Roy, Dean of Faculty

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

Starting English early with songs and stories:
Are there measurable benefits in oral performance at the end of elementary school?

Hélène Duguay

This study investigates the measurable long-term effects of starting to learn English at a young age in a school context. It compares francophone learners, Early Starters (ESs), who began to learn English in grade one (age six), with Late Starters (LSs), who were introduced to English as a second language (ESL) in grade four (age nine). Other differences between the groups besides starting age, include the total amount of instructional time for English in elementary school; the distribution of that instructional time and the pedagogical approach involving songs and stories followed during the first two years of instruction. The study addresses the following broad questions: 1) At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in two instructional contexts, regular and intensive ESL? 2) At the end of grade six, are there identifiable differences in discourse between ESs and LSs after regular and intensive ESL instruction?

Rating scale scores on two oral tasks from White & Turner (2005) show a clear trend for both regular and intensive ESs to outperform LSs though this finding was stronger in the regular ESL group. The discourse analyses point towards a tendency for ESs to produce more comprehensible ideas, more English words, and use more grammatical categories than LS. Thus the additional hours in elementary school in grades one and two seem to have had a positive impact on students' oral performance at the end of grade six. Limitations include confound between amount of instructional time and type of pedagogy, and the absence of a control group.

To my parents, Louise and Gilbert, who always believed in me and flooded me with songs and storybooks so one day I could write great things about them.

To my sister Marianne, to whom I have read so many stories, for her support all along the way.

To all my dear friends, and they are many, who encouraged me along the way. Thank you for your support.

To my dear friend Anne Millette, the inspiration behind this wild idea of teaching songs and stories to grade one students, for all the ideas we discussed while commuting to Montréal, for her supportive ear and encouragement along the way.

To my beloved husband Pierre, for his love, support and patience, and for all the extra fishing trips he had to take so I could do my homework on week-ends. We will have time for week-ends once again.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

AP: Audio-Pal

CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning

ELLiE: Early Language Learning in Europe

ESs: Early Starters

ESL: English as a Second Language

LSs: Late Starters

L1:   Language spoken at home or mother tongue

L2:   Second Language

LES: Learning and Evaluation Situation

MELS: Ministère de l'Éducation, Loisirs et Sports

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SR: Story-Retell

TPR: Total Physical Response

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis study investigates the impact of starting to learn English at a young age in a school context. It compares one group of learners, Early Starters (ESs), who began to learn English in grade one (age six), with a second group, Late Starters (LSs), who were introduced to English as a second language (ESL) in grade four (age nine). There were other differences between the groups besides their starting age. These include the total amount of instructional time for English in elementary school; the distribution of that instructional time – "drip feed" or intensive; and the pedagogical approach followed during the first two years of instruction. The study investigates the following broad question: What is the impact of additional hours in grades one and two on the oral performance of students at the end of elementary?

My interest in this topic developed from my experience as an ESL teacher. In the years after the introduction of the Québec MELS Elementary Cycle One ESL program in 2006, in which students start ESL in grade one and which prescribes the use of songs and stories from the English children's repertoire, I observed that older elementary students were more at ease when speaking English and when completing a task than were previous cohorts who had started ESL in grade three (as of 2001), and before that, in grade four. I felt that they expressed their ideas more fluently; they spoke more rapidly and freely, had fewer and shorter hesitations and pauses in their speech, and produced longer sentences. I also thought they used more function words and a wider variety of nouns, adjectives, verbs. I put my teacher's intuition to the test in June, 2010 when there was a unique opportunity to compare texts written at the same time by students then in grades four, five and six. Although writing is a small part of the ESL Elementary program, written data were easier to collect than oral data and more suitable for a pilot study. These students had all started ESL in the same school, in the same year in cycle one; in other words,

they all had four years of ESL, but had started in two different programs. They also had differences in learning time due to different schedules in grades one and two where they had 60 minutes a week and students in grades three to six had 90 minutes a week. Students in grades four (200 learning hours) and five (220 hours) had started with the ESL Cycle One program (songs and stories) while students in grade six (240 hours) had started ESL in grade three with the Cycle Two program (communicative oral interaction activities). Students in grade 5 wrote longer texts in English to tell a story about a picture than students in grade 6 whereas they had texts of similar length in French L1. Grade 4 students' L1 texts were a lot shorter than those in grades 5 and 6, but they wrote texts of similar length to grade 6 students in English despite the fact that they had 40 hours less ESL learning time and were two years younger. Two years later, I compared the writing of the 2010 grade six students with that of the 2012 grade six cohort who had started ESL with the Cycle One ESL program (songs and stories). By then, the 2012 cohort had received both the songs and stories program and more time, so were obviously stronger. Findings confirmed my hunch: students who had experienced the Elementary Cycle One ESL program used a wider range of words, had more varied ways of expressing past, present and future, were more accurate in their use of pronouns and possessive forms, and used a wider range of function words than students who had begun learning English in grade four (Duguay, 2011; Duguay and White, 2011).

From the positive effects found in the written data, I now wish, as the goal of this thesis, to further document the oral proficiency of students, all early starters, at the end of Cycle Three (grade six) in instructed contexts where the guidelines of the MELS Elementary ESL programs are followed. As a strong emphasis is put on developing students' oral ability by the end of elementary school, I am particularly interested in observing if the progress made in written

production by early starters, all of whom began learning English with the song and story (Elementary Cycle One) ESL program, can also be observed in oral production. The findings from the early starters will be compared to a group of late (grade four) starters investigated by White and Turner (2005).

BACKGROUND

Quebec Context. Nearly 80% of the inhabitants of the province of Quebec speak French (francophones) at home. The 20% of Quebecers who speak English (anglophones) or other languages (allophones) are primarily located in the Greater Montreal area although there is a growing tendency for the allophone population to establish itself throughout the province. In the *Régime Pédagogique/ Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education, Education Act, article 22 Subject –time allocation,* guidelines for second language instruction in elementary schools provided by the MELS are the same for both ESL and FSL, but in practice, there are some important differences. The first is the allocation of time. In most francophone elementary schools, English as a second language is taught an average of 60 minutes *a week* in grades one and two, and 90 minutes *a week* in grades four to six (320 hours), the exact time being decided by the governing board of each school. In contrast, in most English schools, French as a second language, with a focus on oral and written language skills, is taught a minimum of an hour *a day* starting in grade one (1080 hours).

The second difference involves the teaching of curricular content. Anglophone parents have the option of enrolling their children in bilingual programs (50% French - 50% English) or early or late French immersion, where content subjects like maths and science are taught in French and instructional time in the L2 ranges from every day all day in kindergarten to about

half that time in grade six. Currently, 90 to 95%[1] of the students in the anglophone school system in Quebec are enrolled in early or late French immersion or in bilingual programs. In contrast, English immersion is not an option for francophone students as, in French schools, subjects other than English cannot be taught in English in accordance with the Québec Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, implemented in 1977.

A legal alternative to immersion in French schools is intensive English (IE), which allows students to receive concentrated instruction in English for half of an academic year, usually in grade five or six, instead of the *regular* ESL program of between 60 and 90 minutes a week. The precise amount of time varies between 350 and 400 hours, but it can be called intensive when at least 40% of the instructional time in one school year is devoted to English (see the Guide de l'implantation de l'enseignement intensif de l'anglais, langue seconde, au Québec, SPEAQ, 2012). In intensive classes, the focus is on learning English as a language to be able to function in everyday situations, to be able to understand, speak, read, and write English, but not to learn other subjects through English. Indeed, the curricular content is taught intensively in French during the other half of the academic year. In 2012-2013, around 12% of the Québec grade six student population in the francophone system had access to IE. As parents wish to see their child functionally bilingual by the end of high school (MEQ, 2001) and believe that being able to speak English is an essential part of the skill set of a well-educated person (Lightbown, 2012), IE contributes toward making this an achievable goal.

---

[1] Personal communication with Québec MELS FSL Programs Director

By law, most allophones are schooled in the francophone system. They have access to welcoming classes or are directly integrated in a regular class to learn French as they start school in Québec. Either way, they are immersed in French with their classmates and learn English with them in the regular program, beginning in grade one. In the 2007 Canadian census, 69% of Québec's anglophone population, including 80% of the 18 to 34 year olds, declared themselves capable of using both French and English (Lightbown, 2012). The same year, 51% of Québec's immigrants were capable of using French and English, but only 42% of the total Québec-born francophone population could affirm the same. (Saindon, Landry & Boutouchent, 2011). From these figures, we can extrapolate that two of these populations, anglophones and allophones, have developed high levels of ability in their second languages. The francophone population, however, lags far behind in terms of bilingualism.

Despite the deficit in instructional time allocated to learning ESL in the francophone school system, high school graduates need to be able to function in French and in English to pursue college and university studies and to compete in the job market with their bilingual, trilingual and multilingual peers. Starting English earlier in grade one, rather than grade three, was perceived as a way of giving everyone a head start, a better chance to develop the minimal basic knowledge to function in a second language and get closer to the 1200 hours Stern (1985, p. 20) considered necessary to reach this goal.

For students in the regular ESL programs, a majority of elementary schools offer an hour a week in grades one and two and 90 minutes in grades three to six, which will give them approximately 300 hours at the end of grade six. In Secondary, there is a suggested time frame of 100 hours of ESL education per year for a total of a maximum of 800 hours from grades one through eleven.

When Intensive English is accessible in a school, following a decision made by the governing board in each school, students spend between 40 and 50 percent of one academic year learning English. The other academic subjects, which they study in French, are also concentrated throughout the year. For students who have the advantage of benefitting from intensive instruction, we need to adjust the calculations, adding between 350 and 400 hours to grade six. This results in a total of 1150-1200 hours of ESL in elementary and secondary school. This is similar to Stern's (1985) recommendation cited above. We turn now to an overview of the ESL program developed for grades one and two.

MELS Elementary ESL Cycle One Program. The starting age for ESL instruction in francophone schools in Quebec has been gradually lowered since 2001. Prior to this time, students started learning English in grade four; the provincial average then was 90-120 minutes a week for a total of ~240 hours per year. When the decision was made to start English earlier, in grade three, some expected that students would receive more hours of English instruction; instead, the weekly average was reduced to 90 minutes a week and the total of ~240 hours was distributed over four, rather than three, years of elementary school. Thus, for most students, the change did not result in any additional time for ESL.

It was not until the Elementary Cycle One ESL program was introduced to all grade one and two students (ages six and seven) in 2006 that an average of an hour a week was added in each of these two years, bringing the total amount of ESL instruction in elementary school to a provincial average of 320 hours. The popular perception that, in learning a second language, younger is better may have influenced this political decision, and it may also be due to the desire

to encourage Francophone public schools to prepare a bilingual work force that would enhance the province's competitiveness in the global market (Laberge, 2005). Although the increase in time was not large, and it was distributed over six, rather than three or four years, an entirely new program was developed for elementary Cycle One English, adapted to the age and interests of young children.

The Elementary Cycle One ESL program, which is taught in grades one and two, focuses mainly on action songs, rhymes and stories with recurrent passages from the early English-speaking childhood repertoire (MELS, 2006). It attempts to reproduce some patterns of home L1 language learning, a sliver of what parents do with their children, as a means of providing oral language input and opportunities for the development of oral fluency through classroom participation, in a context where English is the language of communication for everyone. Of course, no child would be able to learn English as a second language in an hour a week.

Throughout the two years of program experimentation (MELS, 2007) held in ten grade one and two classes across the province before the official implementation of the program, ESL teachers observed that songs, rhymes and stories are effective in engaging young students as their attention is focussed on the task at hand. They learn the essential vocabulary words needed to understand the song or story, sing with gestures, sit and listen attentively, smile, laugh, look amazed in the right places, repeat the recurrent passages from the story with the teacher and later retell the story with the pictures. In my experience, I too have noticed that they are truly involved in the songs, rhymes, and stories[2] even though they are in the early stages of L2 development. As they see the pictures of key elements, learn essential words, follow the read-aloud throughout the

---

[2] In Appendices E and F you will find a sample list of songs and stories used to teach ESL in grades one and two.

book and listen to the teacher's intonation through the songs, rhymes and stories, they hear words repeated often, understand a lot and grasp new vocabulary words. They develop confidence and oral fluency in this safe, pleasurable English-only environment where everything is done with the support of the entire group. Following this whole-class activity, children work individually, often on a cut and paste labelling activity where they match word labels with pictures, using the previewed resources on the board as a support. Most often, an audio version of the song or story performed by an English native speaker singer or storyteller is repeated in the background during this labelling and coloring stage, called a winding-down moment. It allows students to hear the song or story three or four more times, to repeat some of the words and recurrent patterns with the CD and to keep the focus on English. After the labelling, a vocabulary activity related to the story or song is used so the words or expressions are reinvested once again. In the next English period, students try to sing the song or retell the story as a group using the picture resources. In addition to singing songs on numerous occasions and retelling stories, students often use words or short phrases such as "problem, no glue, sharpen pencil please," to communicate the immediacy of their situation.

During the implementation stages of the MELS Cycle One Program, three training days were given by the program writing team to school board ESL consultants and to many Elementary ESL teachers from the public and private sectors in all regions of Québec. A series of Learning and Evaluation Situations (LES) and three teaching handbooks on using English in class, self-monitoring, and maximising the use of stories, were prepared with the program in mind and distributed through eslinsight.qc.ca to help teachers understand the pedagogy. Approved published material for this program was also available within the first year of implementation. When looking at the implementation of the Cycle One program, Fallon and

Rublik (2012) reported a high degree of acceptance of ESL by both students and parents. They noted an increased awareness by teachers that students could function in English only and an increased interest among parents in learning English themselves.

MELS Elementary ESL Cycles Two and Three Program. In Cycles Two and Three, grades three to six, the MELS ESL program (2001) focuses on both the oral and written aspects of the language with the following three competencies*: To interact orally in English, To reinvest understanding of oral and written texts,* and *To write texts.* In this thesis study the focus will be mainly on students' oral development in English over their six years in elementary school. The first competency, *To interact orally in English,* requires the development of students' ability to react to messages, maintain the oral interaction and to take the initiative to transmit oral messages in classroom situations through the use of functional language, the use of strategies, and participation in exchanges, with a pronunciation that can be understood by native speakers. Students are expected to show confidence and autonomy and communicate personal messages easily on a variety of age-appropriate subjects. They often make creative use of the language they have acquired. As they are learners, they use available visual support and linguistic resources and they can seek help from peers and from their teacher. The ESL Cycle Three program is used for both regular and Intensive grade six students.

THE STUDY

The intended contribution of this thesis is to bring to light the positive effect of a song and story pedagogy on the early learner language despite minimal time input. In this study, the oral proficiency of students in regular and intensive settings who began learning English in grade one with the MELS ESL Cycle One program described above (Early Starters, or ESs) was compared with that of the grade six students reported by White and Turner (2005) who began learning English in grade four (Late Starters, or LSs) through the replication of two oral tasks from White and Turner, namely Audio-Pal (AP) and Story Retell (SR).

In Chapter 2 I will review the literature that motivated this study. Topics include the amount of time, distribution of instructional time and timing of instruction; early learning and its pedagogy in an instructional setting; the impact on vocabulary development through songs and storytelling in the classroom; the lexical richness of picture books, the associated effective pedagogy and the impact of students' text talk (associating events in their lives to the text). I will then discuss the MELS expectations regarding learners' oral performance at the end of elementary school and describe the study that inspired the research presented in this thesis. The chapter concludes with the research questions addressed in this thesis study and the hypotheses that were entertained.

The Methodology section in Chapter 3 will describe the pedagogy in ESL Cycle One, the participants, the characteristics of the two tasks Audio-Pal and Story Retell, and the rating procedures from White and Turner (2005) involved in this study as they were used to measure fluency. Some measures of learners' discourse (e.g. number of running words, number of comprehensible ideas, lexical variety per 100 words), will be described.

In Chapter 4, analysis and results, the regular ES students' oral productions will be compared to that of the regular LS students', and the intensive ESs' oral productions will be compared to the intensive LSs' through the oral fluency rating scale from White and Turner (2005), and through elements of oral discourse analysis .

The discussion in Chapter 5 will consider how the ESs and LSs fared whether they were in a regular or an intensive class. The results of the four research questions will be discussed in terms of the current literature, as well as the limitations of this study.

The conclusion, Chapter 6, will focus on the effects of the Cycle One ESL program for the learners and on the pedagogical implications for the language teachers. It will also suggest future research directions to improve language learning for early learners.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review the literature that investigates the amount and distribution of time, as well as the type of instructional input that young learners need to learn a second language. The focus will be on the learning outcomes of early and late starters in relation to age of onset of learning and type of pedagogy. The chapter will also include studies that consider the short- and long-term impact of songs and stories on language development in both regular and intensive instructional contexts.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXT: AMOUNT OF TIME, DISTRIBUTION OF TIME AND TIMING

Three key issues regarding the instructional context are the total amount of time allocated to learning the second language, the way in which the time is distributed, and the pedagogy used to maximize this time.

Amount of time. Stern (1985) proposed that English learners of L2 French with average aptitude need 1200 hours of total accumulated classroom time to achieve a basic knowledge of French, 2100 hours to feel at ease in the language, and 5000 hours to be bilingual. If we apply this estimate to French L1 learners of L2 English, it is clear that one of the important constraints for ESL in Québec is the limited amount of instructional time available for students in elementary and secondary schools. As shown in Chapter 1, most French L1 students of L2 English will have accumulated a total of only about 800 hours of classroom time by the end of high school.

In a study directly related to this thesis, White and Turner (2005, 2012) compared the oral performance of students in regular and intensive ESL programs at the end of grade six. Not surprisingly as they had six times the amount of instructional time in grade six, students in the

intensive groups significantly outperformed those who were enrolled in the regular program. Their study was designed to add knowledge about oral skill development in ESL and built on work by Spada and Lightbown (1989), who had shown that students in intensive programs were able to produce more words in a greater lexical variety than regular students, who needed more prompting from their teacher to be able to complete an oral task. White and Turner were interested in documenting learners' oral performance during individual as well as paired tasks that were representative of the communicatively-oriented ESL program (2001) in Quebec. Three tasks were selected for this comparison study. All student performances were audio-recorded.

In Audio-Pal, students talked individually for one minute about themselves, their family and bedroom in the pre-test and about their friends, school and hobbies in the post test. The rating scale, a sequence of yes/no questions, focussed on fluency, variety of sentence patterns, and linguistic accuracy and also took into account the use of French.

The Story-Retell task provided two short animated video clips, Arnold the Ducks (Evanie, 1990) as a pre-test, and The Dingles (Drew, 1988) as a post test. Students were asked to individually retell the story immediately after watching the video. They were expected to talk about the characters and to give information about the beginning, middle and end of the story. The rating scale for Story-Retell measured the coherence of the story, the number of key elements provided, the fluency, as well as the use of French.

The third task was an Info-Gap, where students in pairs had to describe some missing parts of a picture to each other and place them in the correct spot in order to complete the class or house picture. Students had to initiate the conversation, listen, respond, and sustain it. The rating scheme tapped their knowledge of, and quick access to, specific familiar vocabulary such as

prepositions of location and school or house objects. Points were deducted when students used French. In the three tasks, the grade 6 intensive ESL students had gained more language over the year than the grade 6 regular ESL students and the differences were significant. In this study, we will be working with Audio-Pal and Story-Retell.

Distribution of time. There is considerable research evidence that learning a second language over an extended period in small increments of time throughout elementary school is not an efficient route to communicative competence (Stern, 1985). Thus students in regular ESL classes, taught an hour or two a week for a total of 40 to 80 hours a year throughout elementary school, are unlikely to achieve high levels of oral fluency (Collins, Halter, Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Muñoz, 2012; Netten & Germain, 2012; White & Turner, 2005), especially when they do not have access to the second language outside the classroom (Collins & White, 2011). Netten and Germain (2004) noted other drawbacks to the so-called drip-feed distribution of time in a study involving intensive French as a second language. First, students who had limited time to learn a second language seemed to develop declarative knowledge about how that language works but did not get to the point of being able to *use* the language. Second, as there was often barely enough time to start an activity, it was difficult for students to remember the information from one lesson to the other, and instructional time was devoted more to reviewing the last lesson than to teaching new material. As well, students were not cognitively challenged in their learning. They were unmotivated and discouraged as they did not perceive progress. These findings resulted from the conditions in which students had to learn, not from their inability to learn.

Intensive English or French at the end of elementary school, with 350-400 hours in one year, is generally considered to be an effective instructional model for learning the second language (Lightbown & Spada, 1989, 1991, 1994; MacFarlane, 2005; Netten & Germain, 2012;

Serrano, 2012; White &Turner 2005). This is the case, whether the hours are concentrated in five months or distributed over a whole year (Collins & White, 2011). Regardless, in order to be efficiently used, time should be accompanied by good teaching practices with learning strategies that focus both on fluency and accuracy (Germain, Netten & Movassat, 2004).

Timing. Another issue that is critical to this study is the timing of ESL instruction. There are two perspectives on the best age to start learning a second language. The common belief is that early starters (ESs) have an advantage over late starters (LSs). However, some researchers have shown that LSs can catch up to, and even outperform, ESs in the long run.

The 'earlier is better' argument. When younger learners have access to a natural second language learning environment, they practice their language through songs and games and imitate the L1 children who are their play- or schoolmates as they interact with them. Young learners in these settings are exposed to the L2 many hours every day (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). DeKeyser (2000) pointed out that younger learners have an absolute advantage over older learners in second language acquisition as they mostly use implicit learning mechanisms, an ability that everybody will lose somewhere between the ages of six and seventeen. In his study that replicated the Johnson and Newport (1989) study about the critical period with a population that was different in terms of L1, education and socioeconomic status, he confirmed that the Critical Period Hypothesis applied to implicit learning of abstract language structures, that younger learners managed to reach native or native-like levels of language regardless of their verbal aptitude, and that only adults with high-verbal ability were capable of reaching these native-like levels (DeKeyser 2000, Harley and Hart,1997) as they would need to use more analytical, problem-solving abilities to compensate for the loss of the implicit learning mechanisms.

However, although the ultimate attainment of children who learn a second language implicitly in a natural setting may be impressive (Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979), huge amounts of exposure are required (DeKeyser, 2000, Muñoz, 2006). In many schools, target language input is limited and does not allow students to make use of their implicit learning mechanisms (DeKeyser, 2000).This is one reason that early learning in a typical drip feed classroom setting, with restricted amounts and types of exposure to the second language, limited language variety, as well as the more formal type of classroom discourse that is available (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), is perceived to be an inefficient approach. Children simply do not have the exposure that they need to make use of their hypothesized implicit learning advantage (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Spada, 2015). As Muñoz (2008) has pointed out, even ESs who have more instructional time at an early age often do not show long term proficiency benefits. In the Barcelona Age Factor project (BAF), Muñoz and her team analyzed students who started learning English at different ages, mainly 8, 11, 14, and 18 and over. They collected data through various tests after 200 hours, 416 hours and 726 hours of instructional time. They found that late starters outperformed the youngest learners, the fastest learners being the ones who started at age 11. An example of such a finding comes from a study conducted in Switzerland by Pfenninger (2014). She compared four groups of learners at the end of secondary school, each with a different combination of age of onset and instructional program. She found similar performances in composition, grammar judgement, and vocabulary measures by two of the groups: the ESs who had completed an ESL CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) early immersion program (90 minutes a week) in elementary school followed by CLIL immersion in secondary school, and the LSs that had began learning English in secondary school in a CLIL program. Aside from outperforming all the other groups on a listening measure, there was no time

advantage for the ESs. Finding that when exposure to English was limited to a few hours of class per week ESs did not attain higher levels of proficiency than LSs, Pfenninger questioned the blind trust given to an early start without taking into consideration the conditions for learning. Specifically, along with large amounts of meaning-focused English exposure in secondary school, both the ES and LS groups with CLIL had explicit language instruction in secondary, allowing them to employ some of their developing analytic abilities.

In a study conducted in the Netherlands, De Bot (2014) found that ES students who started at age four improved significantly in English vocabulary and grammar and achieved higher levels of proficiency than control groups. When these young students had an increase in time for English lessons per week (an hour or less, one to two hours, or two hours and more), there was a significant effect on those who had more time. There is little information on the control group. The teacher's language proficiency also had a strong influence on the results for vocabulary after a year, and on grammar after two years. LSs (aged eight-nine) made more progress over the two year study. De Bot (2014) cited a longitudinal study (CITO, 2012) where ESs who started in grade one reached higher levels of speaking proficiency over the LS in grade eight. Unfortunately, the author specified that what happened in the classroom had not been taken into consideration.

In a study that focussed on students' motivation, Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2006) argued that in early foreign language instruction, the quality of teaching, teacher proficiency and age-appropriate methodology are essential and contribute to positive attitudes and motivation to later ensure good proficiency. Unfortunately, these often vary to a great extent in regular drip-feed contexts, which is not the case for intensive instruction such as immersion. Nikolov (1999) had previously found that Hungarian children, aged 6 to 8, were enthusiastic

about learning English when the syllabus the teacher used was based on authentic stories from British and American cultures with a variety of attractive tasks related to the stories. In this study, Nicolov talked about the specific effects of pedagogical procedures on motivation, where 90 % of the younger students appreciated the teacher and enjoyed the classroom activities such as stories and related tasks, discussions about the stories, playing bingo, and doing puzzles. In her ethnographic study, students showed high levels of enthusiasm towards English early on and expressed intrinsic motivation related to being challenged by the tasks, negotiating and participating in making decisions about teammates, procedures, assessment by the teacher and self-assessment. This motivation and positive attitude towards English was maintained throughout the eight years of the study. In a study of young learners in a situation of minimal exposure, Larson Hall (2008) found a beneficial effect of an early start for phonological and basic morphosyntactic abilities and suggests that even with minimal input, there could be advantages such as increased vocabulary, better speaking fluency and the ability to produce native-like phonemes.

Does a higher level of enthusiasm lead to better learning outcomes? This was investigated in a Swedish case study from the Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE) research project. Tragant Mestres and Lundberg (2011) reported that students in grades one, two and three enjoyed learning English through a variety of activities such as TPR (Total Physical Response) games, songs, rhymes, picture books, everyday talk, dialogues and film/TV-serials and were successful at interacting in English. However, when they changed school in grade four, they were introduced to a more traditional type of instruction through textbooks, workbooks, grammar exercises and translation. The researchers then observed more code switching, confusion and hesitation in the children's oral production than before. They guessed that these effects could possibly result from

the stress of performance during translation and grammar activities, when children had to focus on form and avoiding errors, rather than looking forward to the encouraging feeling of being able to speak English more naturally.

In another ELLiE study, this time in Croatia and also reported by Tragant Mestres and Lundberg (2011), a teacher used an interactive teaching style. She interacted in English with the learners most of the time and had a strong focus on communication. She used activities such as role play, games, songs, and storytelling and a lot of extra materials like flash cards and cut-outs in class. She often used rap with her students during the four years of the study, which her pupils liked and which she believed was a good way to develop 'rhythm for English'. The students scored above average in grade 4. Following DeKeyser (2000), it would appear that this type of pedagogy was a benefit to these younger learners, in that they were given an opportunity to use their implicit learning mechanisms before they were cognitively ready for explicit learning.

The 'later is more efficient' argument. Research has shown that older learners can learn faster than pre-adolescent children when they use their explicit learning mechanisms in the early stages of acquisition (DeKeyser, 2003; Muñoz, 2011; Spada, 2015). This gives LSs an advantage in learning a second language that is related to their age. Indeed, Lightbown (2000) suggested that since the time available for contact with the second language is insufficient in elementary school classroom settings, it might be more effective to wait until students are older and have developed the ability to use a variety of learning strategies. Moreover, if they started later, they might have more opportunities to sustain their use of language outside the classroom as they grow into adolescence and adult years.

As was shown above, a strong argument for starting later comes from the findings of the Barcelona Age Factor Project (BAF), which measured the acquisition of English as a foreign language in a school context by Catalan/Spanish speakers. A variety of tests were used, including dictation, cloze, listening comprehension, grammar, written composition, oral narrative, oral interview, phonetic imitation, phonetic discrimination and role-play. Close to 800 students were tested after 200, 416, and 726 hours of instruction. In summary, the BAF research showed that in a context where students learned in school with approximately one to two hours a week, adolescent learners and adults initially outperformed younger learners on the different tests. Young learners who started at age eight were able to catch up with other learners only after 726 hours of instruction (Muñoz, 2006). These findings are in line with those of a Swedish study which found no differences between grade six students who had started English either in grade one or in grade three and had the same total number of lessons (Holmstrand, 1982, in Muñoz, 2006).

Mora (2006) analysed the oral fluency test results at the end of 726 hours of instruction of a sample of 60 advanced students from the BAF project with age at onset of 8 and 11 years old and also found that the late starters outperformed the early starters. In this small study, the pedagogical context was specified. Mora noted that learner–teacher interactions were seldom in English, oral interaction occurred between non-native peers, and thus, opportunities for contact with native English were limited to rare occasions of audio-visual material in the classroom.

The studies cited above show that the amount of instructional time is an important factor in learning a second language (Collins, et al, 1999; Collins & White, DeKeyser, 2000; 2011; Lightbown & Spada, 1989, 1991, 1994,2006; MacFarlane, 2005; Muñoz, 2006, 2012; Netten & Germain, 2012; Serrano, 2012 Stern, 1985; White & Turner, 2005;), but research does not seem

to support the 'earlier is better' position for classroom learning (Collins et al, 1999; Collins & White, 2011; Lightbown, 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2006; Mora, 2006; Muñoz, 2008, 2011, 2012; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Netten & Germain, 2004, 2012; Pfenninger, 2014; Spada, 2015 Stern, 1985 White & Turner, 2005;). However, there is evidence that age-appropriate pedagogy may allow young learners to make use of their implicit learning abilities in ways that more formal and explicit types of teaching do not (DeKeyser, 2000; De Bot, 2014; Larson-Hall, 2008; Nikolov, 1999; Tragant et al, 2011).

The age issue is very relevant to this thesis study, and the context and pedagogy in which the learning occurs are important, as well. When the MELS ESL team was asked to create the Cycle One program for grades one and two, the reasoning underlying the early start was most likely based on the belief that *earlier is better.* Since the new program had to respect the Cycle Two and Three ESL programs already in place, the decision was made to develop an age-appropriate pedagogy that would revolve around authentic songs and stories familiar to English L1 children. The aim was to provide exposure to comprehensible language material that would be interesting and motivating for the young learners and allow for implicit learning before they were cognitively ready to learn explicitly. The intent of the MELS Cycle One program was to develop a pedagogy in which students would sing English songs and listen to English stories in English class. They would talk about them, make connections with the texts, and retell the stories entirely in English in a relaxed but busy and engaging classroom atmosphere; the intention was to maximize the opportunities for implicit learning to take place.

This leads to a consideration of the potential for students to learn words through pedagogical activities related to stories and songs. As elementary school-age learners are in the process of storing vocabulary for a lifetime, they are ready for large word gains. Beck and

McKeown (1991) suggest that school-age children learn about 3000 words per year in their L1 while Nation (2001) claims that L1 students add 1000 word families to their vocabulary every year. Stories and songs contain an immense language development potential as they are filled with models of good writing, interesting language structures, and new content.

In light of these expectations, research sets some standards pertaining to vocabulary knowledge. Nation (2006) suggests that children should know the 3000 most frequent word-families [3] to minimally follow a conversation and read graded readers, but they would need 6000-7000 word-families to speak English fluently and to understand movies such as Shrek and Toy Story. He also suggests that for unassisted comprehension of novels or newspapers, students need to know 98% of the words in a book or newspaper, which would require knowledge of the 9000 most frequent word-families. In the case of early beginning learners of L2, who have almost no vocabulary, it is almost impossible to choose stories in which they will already know 98% of the words. To help students compensate for their lack of knowledge in the L2, we use pictures, gestures, and familiar contexts and topics to convey the message and teach the language. As we will see below, songs and stories help children understand and develop vocabulary as well as more complex grammatical forms of a language. We want to find a way to use these songs and stories to help maximise our students' learning of English. We also want them to develop some cultural awareness of the language in an elementary school context.

In the published research on vocabulary development, I have found only a few studies that have investigated the acquisition of the most frequent 1000 words of English. Indeed, a working assumption in several studies is that the student participants already know the first two thousand

---

[3] A word family consists of a headword, its inflected forms and its closely related derived forms (Nation, 2013 p.11).

(2K) most frequent vocabulary families on the General Service List (GSL) (Horst, 2010). The work by Collins and White (2011) is of particular interest. They tested Quebec students' vocabulary recognition at the end of their grade six intensive course and estimated that students were familiar with approximately 75% of the thousand (1K) most frequent words of the English language. In a study of older students in the regular context who started ESL in grade three, Horst, White, Cobb and Martini (2011) found big gaps in these students' knowledge of high frequency vocabulary throughout high school. They pointed out that attaining knowledge of all of the 2000 most frequent words is critical for listening comprehension and that knowledge of all of the 4000 most frequent words is an important goal for reading comprehension. The fact that this goal is not met by the end of secondary is a cause for concern. In the following section, we will look at the literature related to classroom experience with songs and stories, especially in terms of language development in the first or second language as there is a large body of literature that supports their use in language learning.

IMPACT OF SONGS AND STORIES ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Impact of Songs. Throughout history, before the emergence of print and literacy, in the oral tradition, songs were used to tell stories as a way of relaying information or transmitting knowledge. Still today, parents and teachers relay language to children through the classic songs and rhymes of yesteryear. Gromko (2005) notes that when children use actions while singing, they are constructing mental images of the concepts they are learning. Morrow (1996 as cited in Wiggins, 2007) also reported that participation in song activities in early education supports oral proficiency in a first or second language. It helps in the development of vocabulary, phonemic

awareness, comprehension, retention, critical thinking skills, creativity, self-expression and encourages dialogue between children and adults. Recurrent refrains encourage students to join in the songs or the retelling of songs in story form. Songs also encourage students to use more sophisticated language, promote interest in learning more language, and help students communicate ideas more clearly (Wiggins, 2007). Lamb and Gregory (1993) show a positive relationship between music and reading through musical pitch discrimination, phonemic awareness and reading performance. In a study of vocabulary learning from a Greek song, Milton (2008) reported a relationship between the number of repetitions of words and the learning of these words. In this study, a song was repeated once a week for eight weeks. When words were repeated four times in the song, the learning of these words was enhanced, but importantly, the long term retention rate of these words was 100%, even after three months with no Greek input.

Lexical Richness in Picture Books. Studies investigating the acquisition of vocabulary by L1 children suggest that young children learn between 1000 and 5000 words each year, most of it incidentally (Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop and Linn, 1992; Nagy & Herman, 1987). Some of this incidental learning occurs through stories. In our society, parents with young children often read them stories as part of their daily routine. This helps to develop children's creativity and imagination, as well as explain how things are organised in life. Parenting books, magazines, and television advertising emphasize story reading time as an important bonding ritual often associated with bedtime and cuddling up and may also suggest that reading stories very early in life is a crucial way to develop a child's brain and language. There is support for this in the research literature as well.

Several studies have investigated the lexical richness of L1 children's stories. Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop & Linn (1992) reported that "the language in story books is richer and more complex than language that children are exposed to in their daily conversations. Storybooks contain more descriptive vocabulary and longer and more complex sentences than ordinary speech. Through exposure to storybooks, children are exposed to new word meanings and are able to comprehend more complex grammatical forms (p. 9-10)." However, the lexical richness of these topics, which include a large percentage of low-frequency words, would require more preparation and support on the part of teacher for L2 learners so they would be able to understand than would simplified or graded readers. Meara (1993) found that comic books such as Tintin contained richer speech and a wider variety of vocabulary than BBC radio English lessons. Webb and Macalister (2013) compared the lexical load of three different corpora: L1 children's stories, L2 graded readers and L1 adult texts and found the lexical richness of texts written for children to be the highest. L1 children's stories comprised a vocabulary size of 11,000 word families: graded readers, 3000 word families: and L1 adult texts, 10,000 word families. Webb and Macalister (2013) also found in their corpus of authentic texts for young people that texts written for L1 children offer several advantages: they approach 90% coverage of the first 2000 most frequent (2K) words in English, contain a variety of age-appropriate and motivating topics, such as animals, nature and natural environments, and children's story genres, but also have the highest lexical demand as they are filled with a variety of words from children's characters, such as, dragons, fairies, ghosts and pirates; words from the animal, fish, bird and insect worlds (bears, caterpillars, hedgehogs, penguins...), description of wildlife (buzz, claw , fluffy, tame...), as well as their natural environment (lagoons, nests, twigs...). They argue that graded readers, which in their corpus contained 242 word families, would be easier for L2 learners, and that L1 children's

authentic texts, which contained 756 word families, would be much more challenging for independent reading. Children acquire many words through repetition of ordinary activities that provide frequent exposure to a limited number of words (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Leblanc and Leblanc (1980) report several studies showing that children who are read aloud to regularly at home by the age of two have more vocabulary, achieve better results, and enjoy more positive attitudes when they get to school.

With respect to vocabulary input from teachers in the classroom, many of the 1000 most frequent words in English (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and function words such as articles, discourse connectors and adverbs) that occur in stories often did not occur in teacher talk (Collins, White, Trofimovitch, Cardoso, and Horst 2012). Words pertaining to the physical world, business and commerce, history and social studies were also absent from the teacher corpus Horst (2009) analyzed. Through stories and songs, students would be able to see and hear these words frequently, as they are repeated in context, and acquire them naturally, but there would need to be follow-up activities related to this vocabulary. Further evidence of the potential benefits of stories in the classroom comes from a corpus of the speech of intensive teachers collected by Collins, White, Trofimovitch, Cardoso, and Horst (2012). They found that, in comparison to instructional teacher talk (e.g. classroom management, giving directions), when teachers read stories aloud and discussed them with their students, there was a considerable increase in the frequency and range of exposure to otherwise infrequent teacher talk language elements, such as *his/her* possessive determiners and for the *-ed* past tense verb forms. In the next section, we will review research that has investigated pedagogy and language learning from story books.

Stories and Pedagogy in the Language Classroom. Beck and McKeown (1991) suggest that school-age children learn about 3000 words per year in their L1 while Nation (2001) claims that L1 students add 1000 word families to their vocabulary every year. As elementary school-age learners are in the process of storing vocabulary for a lifetime, they are ready for large word gains. Stories and songs contain an immense language development potential as they are filled with models of good writing, interesting language structures, and new content which leads to a consideration of the potential for the L2 students to learn words through pedagogical activities related to stories and songs. Picture books, in particular, offer many enjoyable language learning opportunities for young learners and pre-adolescents. The illustrations in a book and the background knowledge of the subject can have a positive impact on comprehension. They help learners understand the key elements of the story and increase the potential for vocabulary learning, which can be used to develop students' compensatory and learning strategies (Elley, 1989; Webb and Macalister, 2013). Tonzar, Lotto and Job (2009) suggested that providing an L2 word from a picture was easier for children than from an L1 word and created stronger links in the brain. In our context, the children's stories are read aloud by the teacher in the classroom. Chang and Leung (1984) reported that seven-year-old children were able to name pictures faster in their L2 than they were able to link and translate the words from their L1 to their L2, even when they were beginning to learn ESL. The books teachers choose contain pictures to help comprehension and recurrent sentences or patterns; therefore, we can take advantage of the frequent repetition of rich vocabulary available for learning a language in a variety of contexts. From this point of view, there would be no need for an ESL teacher to use the students' L1. Blok (1999) suggests that a storytelling routine in class creates predictability so that children know what to expect and therefore provides opportunities for students to get involved in the book.

When a teacher is using a dialogic reading style, we can expect a stronger effect on language development as there is a conversation between the book, the teacher and the students, such as when children say words they have just learned as they look at the pictures, or when they repeat recurrent passages found in the stories. When previewing key words and retelling stories are part of the routine, students prepare for these events and are attentive to the language they need. This structure also provides a scaffold for better understanding and for stronger language development. As stories are repeated and new stories are added to their repertoire, students will gradually perform better in constructing meaning and will need less support and scaffolding (Blok, 1999). Elley (1991) points out that books offer high vocabulary input, allow repetition of recurrent passages, key words and events and allow the possibility of participating in simple discussions.

Elley (1991) reported on nine ESL studies that he or other researchers carried out in elementary schools mostly in the South Seas: the South Pacific islands of Niue and Fiji, Singapore, but also in the United States, United Kingdom and in Canada (New Brunswick) for children with a variety of L1s. He compared the learning outcomes in audio-lingual ESL instruction to children's performance after a book flood in these various contexts. In the book floods, students aged between six and twelve were exposed, depending on the study, to a variety of illustrated books including books read aloud by the teacher, shared reading in which two students read together, sustained individual silent reading and reading while listening to taped recordings of the books. He reported that the use of illustrated story books in a classroom had the following advantages: children were immersed in meaningful texts; had better word recognition, learned more vocabulary, and had better comprehension from repeated reading. In addition, when they had the chance to speak freely about high interest stories, they developed oral language from

the written story, focussed on meaning but also used better language structure and grammar. Children also developed a positive attitude towards books that were related to other subjects and languages and had intrinsic motivation to return to the books and to further their learning with follow-up activities. He reported significant growth in reading comprehension and in knowledge of English structures with students who had received the book flood treatment. Finally, when students shared the reading-aloud of a book with partners and when the teacher did an activity with the book, students showed higher oral performance during testing than students involved in silent reading of books.

Lightbown (2000) also reported on the New Brunswick book flood project in which students individually read a book while listening to the audio-taped version of the book. At the end of three years of the program, students performed as well or better than students in an audio-lingual program on measures of oral language and aural vocabulary. However, after six years of this book treatment, they did not perform as well as students who had more teacher guidance and opportunities for oral and written tasks.

In a bilingual read-aloud project (Lyster, Collins & Ballinger, 2009), children in a French immersion setting, aged six to eight, were read chapter book stories from the Magic Tree House series that have matching English and French editions. The children's English and French teachers alternated reading the chapters in the two languages in their classrooms. Students were able to retell the story and talk about the topic with their peers and teachers in both their L1 and L2. The situation also allowed extensive opportunities for students to use a variety of language strategies.

Webb and Macalister (2013) also mention that the greater amount of word repetition in children's texts could help teachers identify key words and teach them in pre-reading activities to help comprehension. They could also select other texts with similar themes or topics to increase learners' knowledge of these words. The variety of contexts, the frequent oral repetition of the topic-related vocabulary, with the repeated readings, classroom discussions, story retelling and other activities about the text would expose young elementary school ESL students to a wider range of new words available for acquisition.

Student Participation around the Story. Elley (1989) noticed that when children are sitting still, they "concentrate their attention at a deeper level than at any other times during the day...So the contents are more likely to be processed at a deeper level" (p.4). He analysed seven and eight year old children's natural vocabulary acquisition from picture book stories read by the teacher. When the story was read three times, students remembered 15 % more vocabulary than when they had just read the story once. Additionally, if there was another type of intervention with the words from the text such as focussing on some vocabulary words from the story, playing vocabulary games related to the story, making group murals, acting and miming, reading the story aloud in pairs, children would learn twice as many words and the learning of these words seemed to be more permanent. Furthermore, children who had less vocabulary to start with were able to learn just as much as those who began with more vocabulary. Wiggins (2007) points out that an engaging book allows students to increase their level of understanding, encourages students to talk about the characters during the reading, to speak in a group, to share personal experiences related to the story with the group, to use the vocabulary from the text, and to learn new vocabulary used in the story. As many children's books are songs in a story form, they have repetitive refrains where children can join in on several occasions, thus increasing the opportunity

to expand their vocabulary knowledge. Wiggins also notes that for emergent readers, both in mother tongue and in second language learning, stories and songs, when used in a participatory fashion, can support vocabulary acquisition and phonemic awareness, strengthen literacy skills through opportunities to talk about the text, develop interest in reading, encourage the use of language for reflexive and analytical thinking, and facilitate comprehension and retention of information so the student can reproduce it sequentially. Romney, Romney and Braun (1988) suggest that when stories do not end with teacher directed formal questions, but instead, when children are encouraged to ask spontaneous questions or make comments, they show greater interest in the story and want to understand better. Repeated exposure to words used in different contexts, through different stories, helps provide students with a common understanding of the new words that can be learned incidentally from illustrated books. As new words are encountered in literature, they can be explained in order to increase word knowledge (Fondas, 1992).

In early elementary ESL, pictures are typically used to teach the key words that are essential for comprehension prior to listening to songs and stories. As most of the stories chosen have recurrent patterns, students can get involved quickly and join in during the initial storytelling and subsequent readings. During this vocabulary teaching period, students often intervene to discuss a personal link with the words, *"Me, two brother(s)". "Look! Loose tooth!" "Dad, motorcycle".* Elley (1989) and Fondas (1992) both mentioned that word acquisition was higher when learners discussed the words and ideas from the texts than when there was no discussion. Beck and McKeown (2001) refer to "text talk" when children use the ideas from the story and connect them as they retell the story. This helps young students have a better understanding of the story and allows them to reuse more vocabulary from the story, thus increasing their vocabulary learning by linking words from the story with their own personal experiences through a text-to-

self approach. With the support of the second language teacher, pre-learning of key words, frequent repetition of texts, pictures to support these texts, and learning strategy instruction, ESL students are capable of understanding an age-appropriate story, talking about it, retelling the story, and discussing the language and the artwork involved. By working with graphic organizers to classify words and organize ideas in a story or through reinvestment of language from texts, students may gain a wider variety of words, develop story key words and connecting words, many of which are among the 1000 most frequent (1k) words in English, precisely the words that were found by Horst, White, Cobb and Martini (2011) to be missing from the typical classroom input.

Oral Discourse, Fluency and Accuracy. Rossiter, Derwing, Manimtim and Thomson (2010) claim that oral fluency is the most salient marker of proficiency in second language. While a common definition relates to the capacity to produce the vocabulary and grammar of a language, they see it as a performance phenomenon related to 'flow, continuity, automaticity or smoothness of speech' as defined by Koponen and Riggenbach (2000). As the primary goal of most communicative L2 programs is to foster communicative competence, oral fluency is an important outcome criterion (Rossiter et al., 2010). For the development of oral fluency and competence in the L2, Netten and Germain (2012) stress the importance of rich and intensive exposure to the L2, in authentic language and communication situations, and in combination with a literacy-based and project-based pedagogy that focuses on meaning.

The studies reviewed above suggest that teaching and learning ESL an hour a week is not an efficient use of instructional time, nor would starting earlier in a school necessarily be better

(Collins et al, 1999; Collins & White, 2011; Lightbown 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2006; Mora, 2006; Muñoz, 2008, 2011, 2012; Muñoz & Singleton 2011;Netten & Germain, 2004, 2012; Pfenninger, 2014; Spada, 2015: Stern, 1985: White & Turner 2005). However, many other studies show the impact of stories and songs on the oral language development both in L1 and L2 (Blok, 1990: Elley, 1989; Elley, 1991; Wiggins, 2007), and through the variety of vocabulary words available in these texts (Meara, 1993; Meyer *et al*., 1992; Webb and Macalister, 2013).

In this context, what can we observe from the impact of the MELS Cycle One program in which students sing and repeat songs (Wiggins, 2007) and listen to and talk about stories, in a spontaneous way (Romney, Romney and Braun, 1988)? The introduction of the Québec MELS Elementary Cycle One ESL program in 2006 provided an ideal context in which to investigate the language development of ESL students (Early Starters) who had experienced this program from the beginning, that is grade one, in regular and intensive classes. Their oral proficiency at the end of grade six could be compared to that of students in regular and intensive classes who had begun learning English in grade four (Late Starters). We turn now to the expected performance of learners at the end of elementary school in Québec.

EXPECTED ORAL PRODUCTION OUTCOME AT THE END OF GRADE SIX

The MELS ESL program for Cycles Two and Three (grades three through six) emphasizes the importance of oral production as the base of ESL competencies. As students are learning to interact in oral tasks in English, they are asked to react to messages, take the initiative to transmit oral messages and maintain oral interaction using strategies. They are evaluated on their use of

functional language (e.g. It's your turn. Can you repeat please?), use of strategies, participation in exchanges and pronunciation. The following paragraph presents the expected outcome at the end of regular elementary grade six, that is, after about 300 hours of English. It details what students should be able to do in English when they enter secondary school.

> At the end of Elementary grade six, students show confidence and autonomy: they interact more spontaneously and effectively (reacting to messages, initiating messages, maintaining interaction). The exchanges stem from any classroom situation and are more sustained. They may be spontaneous or initiated by the teacher. Students make creative use of a wide range of functional language and communicate personal messages more easily. They correctly use the functional language frequently employed in class, with a pronunciation that can be understood by an English speaker. They frequently use appropriate compensatory and learning strategies. They seek help from peers and not as often from the teacher. They select and make use of available visual support and linguistic resources (MELS Cycles Two and Three ESL program, 2001, p. 355).

In the studies discussed above, we saw that limited added time in the early years with a more formal, traditional pedagogy was not efficient in contributing to oral language development. However, when the pedagogy and evaluation used in this limited time was adapted to young learners through songs, stories, TPR, discussions about the stories, games, and flashcards, the results were more positive in terms of motivation and oral language development. In this thesis study, it is difficult to separate the effects of the additional time offered in grades one and two from that of the song, rhyme and story pedagogy. Indeed, their influence on learners' oral performance at the end of grade six appear to be intimately intertwined. Through this study, we will try to sort out their individual value.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This study addresses the following broad question: what is the impact of additional hours in grades one and two on oral performance at the end of elementary school in grade six? This question will be investigated in the context of two types of ESL instruction available in Quebec, regular and intensive.

RQ1: At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the regular ESL program, as measured by the rating scores on Audio-Pal and Story-Retell?

To answer this question, the performance on two oral production tasks by grade six students in the regular program who began learning English in grade one will be compared to that of grade six students in the regular program who began learning English in grade four.

Prediction: ESs in regular ESL will have a small measurable advantage over LSs in both fluency measures.

Even though the literature tells us that classroom time added in early grades is unlikely to have a long term effect on oral development at the end of regular grade six (Collins and White, 2011: DeKeyser, 2003; Muñoz, 2006; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Pfenninger, 2014; Spada, 2015), the pedagogical approach recommended in the Cycle One ESL program for grades one and two involves exposure to stories and songs. The benefits noted by DeKeyser (2000) and Spada (2015) for this type of learning, combined with production practice such as singing, repeating familiar stories, and talking about texts (Blok, 1999; Elley, 1989, 1991; Romney, Romney and Braun, 1988; Wiggins, 2007) may be evident at the end of elementary grade six in the learners' easy access to story structure and vocabulary and thus have a positive effect on their fluency.

RQ2: At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs receiving intensive ESL instruction, as measured by the rating scores on Audio-Pal and Story-Retell?

To answer this question, the performance on two oral production tasks by grade six students performance of grade six students in the intensive program who began learning English in grade one will be compared to that of grade six students in the intensive program who began learning English in grade four.

Prediction: ES in intensive ESL context will not have a measurable impact on the development of oral language at the end of grade six.

From the literature above, it can be seen that students learn much more in an intensive format rather than in a drip feed context. (Collins and White, 2011; Germain, 2012; Germain, Netten and Movassat, 2004; Lightbown and Spada, 1989, 1991, 1994; MacFarlane, 2005; Netten and; Serrano, 2012; White and Turner, 2005). The time added in the Cycle One program to early starters (ESs), in this case 76 hours (Table 1), should not make a difference after ~400 hours of intensive instruction in grade six.

RQ3: At the end of grade six regular ESL, are there identifiable differences in discourse between ESs and LSs?

Prediction: ESs in a regular ESL context will express more comprehensible ideas and use more varied vocabulary than LSs on both AP and SR tasks.

From their exposure to songs and stories and from previous analysis of texts written by ES students who had gone through the Cycle One ESL program, Duguay (2012) observed that they

used a wider variety of nouns and adjectives, verbs and their inflections, and function words when compared to LS students. From a teacher's point of view, there are reasons to believe that, at a beginner's level, if students can write the word, they can also say it. I predict that ES students compared to LS students will use a wider variety of words, including more nouns, verbs, adjectives and function words than LS students in their performance of the oral tasks.

RQ4: At the end of grade 6 intensive ESL, are there identifiable differences in discourse between ESs and LSs?

Prediction: ESs with Intensive instruction will have a similar numbers of comprehensible ideas as LSs but will demonstrate more lexical variety in their oral texts.

Students who had L2 instruction that included implicit learning at a young starting age, followed by long and massive exposure had higher levels of second language proficiency Pfenninger (2014). This leads me to believe that ES students may have a small advantage in the variety of vocabulary in terms of variety used, with the exception of function words, which intensive LSs already use them in their oral production. As both groups have followed Intensive instruction, ES and LS students should be able to express a similar number of comprehensible ideas on both AP and SR tasks.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, as I analyse and compare the oral production of early and late starters in regular and intensive ESL instructional contexts, I chose to replicate parts of the White and Turner (2005) study and to work with the two first tasks, Audio-Pal and Story-Retell. These tasks offer students the opportunity to express a wide range of language in their L2. In order to situate the study, I will start with an overview of the ES Cycle One pedagogy before describing the participants and the task characteristics and procedures involved in this study.

EARLY STARTERS CYCLE ONE PEDAGOGY

The ESL Cycle One program (MELS, 2006) provides the opportunity for young students in Québec to come into contact with the English language and culture through songs, rhymes and stories selected from the English native speakers' repertoire. There are two competencies: *To act on understanding of texts* and *To communicate orally in English.* These are intertwined and each contributes to the development of the other (MELS, 2006). The key elements of the songs, rhymes and stories are introduced through pictures, drawings or other visual support. The selected songs and rhymes have physical response components to help students live the language. As they listen to, practice and repeat the songs and rhymes, they memorize chunks of language and start building the rhythmicality[4] of the language. The picture book stories selected have a highly predictable sequence of events and recurrent passages, both of which encourage students' spontaneous participation with the group. Following these whole-class activities, children work individually, often on a cut and paste labelling activity in which they match word labels with pictures, using the previewed resources on the board. Most often, an audio version of the song or

---

[4] Rythmicality refers to phonemes, stress patterns, intonation, rhythm and pace of the language (Maley, 1987).

story performed by an English native speaker singer or storyteller is repeated in the background during this labelling and coloring stage, called a winding-down moment. It allows students to hear the song or story three or four more times, to repeat some of the words and recurrent patterns with the CD and to keep the focus on English. After the labelling, a vocabulary activity related to the story or song is used so the words or expressions are reinvested once again. In the next English period, students try to sing the song or retell the story as a group, using the picture resources. In grade two, students also practise retelling some of the stories by creating simple guided personalized versions; for example, creating new verses for a song such as *The Wheels on the Bus* or adapting elements from a story.

Through the first competency, students learn the essential vocabulary words needed to understand the song or story, sing with gestures, repeat the recurrent passages from the story with the teacher and later retell the story with the pictures. The routine used for introducing new songs and stories helps students develop confidence and oral fluency in this safe, pleasurable, English-only environment, where everything is done with the support of the entire group. Even though they are in the early stages of L2 development, as they see the pictures of key elements, they learn essential words, follow the read-aloud throughout the book and listen to the teacher's intonation through the songs, rhymes and stories. They hear words repeated often, understand a significant amount and grasp new vocabulary words.

Through the second competency, students learn to use words or short phrases such as "*problem, no glue, sharpen pencil please,*" to communicate their needs, and to comment on the songs such as by saying *me had a dog* when singing *Old MacDonald* and on stories by saying *no! blue pyjama is best* when reading *Red Is Best.*

In this study, we will look at the oral language generated at the end of grade six following this large input of words through songs, rhymes and stories, in grades one and two.

PARTICIPANTS

Early Starters: The predominantly francophone participants were in grade six (age 11-12) in two different public elementary schools, School A and School B, in the Sorel-Tracy school board, an industrial area about 90 kilometres south of Montreal, Quebec. According to the Québec socio-economic index (IMSE), the socio-economic status of the two schools is low-average (7/10, 10 being the lowest). Outside the ESL classroom, students typically had little or no regular contact with English except for a few video games, Internet, and TV. Only 20% of the students claimed to have contact with English outside the classroom, and that only sometimes (see Student Bio, Appendix D). Students in School A were learning English in the regular program (RES) and started to learn ESL in grade one enthusiastically, with their limited previous experience of English consisting of being able to name a few colours, count to ten and say *hi* and *bye*. Students in School B were learning English intensively in grade six (IES). The group was made up of students from several surrounding schools who chose intensive instruction for their grade six. Nine of these students came from school A where they had been from grades one to five. In order to be accepted in the intensive ESL group, students had to show that they were motivated to learn English, as determined by their ESL teacher, and as requested by school administrators, that they had obtained average to good marks in other school subjects in order to follow the faster rhythm due to reduced time in the other subjects.

The two Early Starter groups had one hour of English a week in grades one and two. They followed the MELS song and story based program for Cycle One described above. In School A,

students had 90 minutes a week of English in grades three to six, for a total of 320 hours spread out over the six years of elementary (Group A). In School B, students had 90 minutes a week of English in grades three to five and intensive in Grade six (distributed in half days of English throughout the year), for a total of 620 hours in elementary school (Group B). The ESL teachers of the Early Starter groups were proficient speakers of English and used English most of the time in class. They followed the current MELS Elementary Cycle Three ESL program (2001), which emphasizes oral interaction, using texts to reinvest their understanding, writing texts, using learning and communication strategies and encourages pair and group work through learning and evaluation situations.

To participate in this study, students had to have written parental authorization. The forms were sent home one week prior to the data collection by the English teacher. In School A, one of the two homeroom teachers was informed of the study, but through a few mishaps and busy moments (yard duty, attending to another group), the second homeroom teacher was never informed and therefore could not remind students to return their forms. On the data collection day, only five students in that group had their authorization to participate in the study. In the past years, most of these parents had agreed to data collection so it was not expected to become an issue. However, instead of two small groups of 18 students each, we ended up with one group of 19 regular ESL participants, consisting of 14 students from one class and five from the other. All levels, from low to high, were represented in this group. In School B, 24 participants in the Intensive group had their signed authorization.

Late Starters: The data from the two Late Starter groups come from the study conducted by White and Turner (2005). Participants attended three different French schools in three different school boards in the Montreal area: one on the island of Montreal, one on the south

41

shore, and one on the north shore. The students had begun learning English in grade four (age nine-ten) and, like the Early Starters, were at the end of grade six when they were tested. There were 69 students from the regular ESL program and 76 students with intensive ESL instruction. Each school had one regular and one intensive group. In the data analysis, I chose to represent the groups per intact classroom and school, identified LS1, LS2, and LS3, instead of treating them as one whole group. This was done to facilitate comparisons when there were differences between intact classes. We know from White and Turner (2005) that 62% of the students in LS3 group spoke English with friends and family outside of the classroom sometimes or often. They had more opportunities to speak English outside the school than the other groups, and they had stronger results in general. The ESL teachers of the Late Starters were all proficient in English and spoke it most of the time in the classroom. They followed the communicatively oriented MEQ program in place at the time. Students in Group C, the regular ESL group used here for comparison, had two hours a week of English in grades four, five, and six. Students in Group D, the intensive group, had two hours a week of English in grades four and five and participated in a half-day ESL Intensive program in grade six. During the other half-day, they focussed on the rest of the grade six curriculum in French. Table 1 summarizes the information for the four groups, Early Starters and Late Starters.

Table 1
Summary of Amount of ESL Instructional Time in Elementary

	Group A	Group B	Group C*	Group D*
	Early Starters (ES)		Late Starters (LS)	
English instruction	Regular grade 6	Intensive grade 6	Regular grade 6	Intensive grade 6
n	18	24	69	76
Time distribution	Grades.1-2 1h/week Grades.3-6 1.5h/week	Like Group A Grades 1- 5 Grade 6: half day intensive all year	Grades 4-6 2h/ week	Like Group C Grades 4 -5 Grade 6: half year intensive
Total ESL hours[5]	320 hours	620 hours	216 hours	544 hours

- from White and Turner (2005)

INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURE

Early Starters in Groups A and B were tested at the end of the school year, in early June, at a time similar to the testing of the Late Starters in Groups C and D. Two oral tasks were used: Audio-Pal and Story-Retell. As this study was a partial replication of White and Turner (2005), the two instruments, as well as guidelines for data collection and analysis used in that study with the LSs, were followed closely. In the two ES groups, students with parental authorisation were recorded in the same week with an MP3 recording device while performing the two oral tasks. Two graduate students in Applied Linguistics helped with the data collection. Table 2 shows how the testing was organized for each class.

---

[5] The number of hours stated in the table represents specific time allotted by schools in each situation.

Table 2
Data Collection Requirements for a Class of 28 Students

Task	Grouping	Speaking time	In between time	Total	Data collectors	Total activity time
Audio-Pal	Individual	2 min. per student	1 min.	84 min.	3	30 min.
The Dingles Story-Retell	Individual	2 min. per student	3 min. Listening to video groups of 3	27 min. Listening + 56 min speaking	3	27 min. Listening (3 students listen to the video while 3 retell story) 30 min. oral

Questionnaires. A background questionnaire (see Appendix D) was completed by each student in order to indicate exposure to English outside the classroom and to identify any bilingual students. However, in this case, there were none. A short interview was conducted with the teachers to ask them about their English language use in the classroom, to identify weak, average and strong students, and to talk about the types of activities they did in class and the material they used during the year to ensure that their teaching was generally in line with the MELS Elementary ESL program.

Audio-Pal Task Characteristics. Tools: Idea map, MP3s, scoring tool. Audio–Pal (AP) is an individual task in which the researcher is looking for the students' ability to talk about self. The researcher introduced the task in English and pointed to the ideas on the Audio-Pal idea map (Appendix A) containing the following text.

"You are doing an audio-exchange with a grade 6 student in British Columbia. As this person would like to know you a little bit, please introduce yourself. Look at the idea map. You can tell

this person about you, your family, your friends, your school...Tell about your favorite activities, favorite things, hobbies...Tell about your house, your favorite place..."

Students introduced themselves and each talked for up to two minutes; the topics mentioned on the idea map included friends, family, school, house, favorite activities or special talents they have. The data were recorded on an MP3 recording device. In the White and Turner (2005) study, students were first recorded for the pre-test where they were given written instructions to talk about themselves, their family and their room for one minute, while the written post test instructions suggested hobbies or after school activities, school and friends. In the Audio-Pal task, it was not possible to validate whether the information the students provided about self was accurate or imaginary; accordingly, the rating scale accounts primarily for the language used.

As I planned this study, I did not realize in time that I would not be using the pre-test information from the Late Starters. As I wanted to make things comparable in this study, the speaking time was increased to two minutes and all topics from the pre-test and post test were suggested. As more topics were used in the same set of instructions, the idea map was provided so students could refer to it if they needed to remember the topics to be discussed. If students needed help, the researchers would first point to the idea map. They then gave suggestions depending on what had already been said: *Talk about your family, your friends, your school...* However, when I was ready to analyse the data, I used only the first minute of the ES student's oral production as was done in the White and Turner (2005) study.

Story Retell Task Characteristics. Tools: Computer, The Dingles clip from the National Film Board (NFB), MP3s, scoring tool. The DVD played from 00:02:55 and stopped at 00:06:22. For Story-Retell (SR), both the Late Starters and Early Starters followed the same

procedure. Students watched a 3:27-minute section of The Dingles (Drew, 1988), an animated

short DVD clip produced by the National Film Board of Canada based on a story book by Helen

Levchuk and John Bianchi. The story is about an old lady who lives peacefully with her cats. One

day a violent storm interrupts this charming picture. In this task, students were asked to retell the

story to one of the research assistants. They needed to talk about the characters and the key

elements of the story: set the scene, describe the precipitating event and the climax (see Appendix

C). In this task, the information given by the students could be checked against the original story.

Students were given the following instructions in English: "After watching the DVD, you are

going to tell me what happened in this story and record it on the MP3 device." For both LS and

ES students, if a student had trouble retelling the story, the researcher could provide prompts

according to what had already been said.

- Do you remember who was in the story?

- Can you talk about the Old Lady and her family?

- What were they doing?

- What happened next?

- Can you talk about the cats?

- What do you think happened to them?

They did not have a time limit to describe their story but most students spoke between 1.5 to 2.5

minutes.

In the next chapter, the rating scales for both the Audio-Pal and Story-Retell tasks and analysis

procedure for the texts will be described. The results of the rating scale analyses and the

discourse analyses will be presented.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this thesis, I will answer the broad question about the impact of additional hours in grades one and two on oral performance at the end of elementary school in grade six in regular classes and in intensive groups. To accomplish this, both qualitative and quantitative data analyses were carried out on the oral data collected from the two tasks, Audio-Pal and Story-Retell. The quantitative analyses followed the procedure described above, using the rating scales. To allow comparison, we used the same rating scale (see Appendix B for Audio-Pal, and Appendix C for Story-Retell) as in the White and Turner (2005) study, which was developed for use in research with grade six ESL students. The researcher used the three sequential yes/no questions on the scale to evaluate students' performance on this task, giving a result from one to six.

The AP rating scale takes into consideration the variety of sentence patterns, the ability of the student to use fluent speech and some authentic idioms, the student's overall ability to produce the oral speech sample in English, the amount of information provided, whether the sentences follow each other smoothly or with hesitation, and whether the sentences are mostly accurate or contain many errors. The SR rating scale assesses the coherence of the story, the number of key elements provided, whether these elements are detailed or not, the student's fluent use of English language structures or just lists of words in English, and the extent to which the student mainly uses English or resorts to French. These rating scales help us determine whether or not the student can produce some English with fluency, as defined by Koponen and Riggenbach (2000) as flow, continuity, automaticity or smoothness of speech.

To ensure inter-rater reliability, two raters, the researcher and a research assistant, rated students with the White & Turner (2005) grid until they achieved similar ratings. After that, a random sample of 20% of the ES students' recordings was rated independently by both raters, and then compared. When there were differences, they were resolved through discussion and comparison with the LS ratings. The rest of the data were then scored independently by the two raters. The two scores were subsequently combined, or doubled when there was one common score, for a result that ranged from two to twelve. This was the same procedure that was followed in the White and Turner (2005) study.

The next section presents the rating scale comparisons that were made to answer Research Questions 1 and 2:

RQ1: At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the regular ESL program, as measured by the rating scores on AP and SR?

RQ2: At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs receiving intensive ESL instruction, as measured by the rating scores on AP and SR?

ORAL FLUENCY RATINGS OF REGULAR ES COMPARED TO LS

Rating Scale Findings. As we can see in Table 3, ESs outperformed all groups of LSs in both Audio-Pal and Story-Retell tasks when measured with the White and Turner (2005) rating scales.

Table 3
Comparison of Regular LS and ES on two Oral Tasks:
Audio-Pal and Story-Retell

	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Audio-Pal					
LS1	28	2	9	3.86	2.01
LS2	22	2	11	3.55	2.74
LS3	19	2	8	3.63	2.14
ES	18	4	12	8.00	2.63
Story-Retell					
LS1	28	2	8	3.39	1.69
LS2	22	2	11	3.21	2.40
LS3	19	2	6	3.05	1.54
ES	18	2	12	5.83	3.19

*Scores out of 12 using White and Turner (2005) scale

The scores on the Audio-Pal task suggest that ES regular students were confident, gave information about self and thus, were able to produce strong oral texts that had higher results than LS students in general. The average Audio-Pal score of 8.00 for ES students indicates that texts were mostly in English, had at least three items of information and contained a variety (two+) of sentence patterns, and that sentences followed one another without long hesitations even though they contained errors. The average scores of 3.55, 3.63 and 3.86 for LS students indicate a text with few sentence patterns, fewer than three items of information, long hesitations and limited use of English.

Here are examples of students' oral production that compare ESs to LSs in the lower performance range. We can see that even if the ES students' output is tedious, there are more

words than for the LSs, and the students are able to convey some information about self that can be understood. The output also contains more function words (*and, in, my, the*) that help clarify the message.

Example 1:

LS (AP score: 2/12): *Hi My name is... [long pause]my uh... my school is big...[very long pause]*.

Example 2:

LS (AP score: 2/12): *uh (name) (sigh) [very long pause 20 sec] Yes skating, uh...roller blade, snow, no basketball.*

Example 3:

ES (AP score 5/12) *Uh my name is ...My favorite uh activity uh in the sport the soccer and the play uh tag uh my friends it's (names) and uh my mom is a work the the Brunet, my dad is a work the uh [bateau] uh yes, uh no Sorel.*

We can also compare the stronger students in the regular ES and LS groups. In talking about themselves, students who were not sure of a word or who did not know it at all used strategies such as gesturing, circumlocution or code switching. However, they were not stalled by the problematic words; they just went on with the rest of their message. They were fairly at ease and could respond to the researcher's questions and comments. They also were able to address a wider range of topics. Furthermore, while 72 % of the ES students were capable of speaking about themselves using 60 words or more in a minute in a text that could be understood by English mother tongue speakers, only 15% of the LS regular students attained that level.

Example 4:

LS (AP score 10/12): *My name is ... I live at s... and and I have a father and mother. I have a sister, she has four...fourteen years old. I am eleven years old and uh I love, I love to play o..on computer. My bedroom is uh is not big. Eh I love...to play in uh a park and, I love /unclear/ I love to eat. I prefer the, to eat dessert and uh...I love, I love...to play with my s...wh...my my sister. My sister is uh...*

Example 5:

ES (AP score 11/12): *My name is ... I go to the ... school. I have one brother. My parent is married. I go uh at the football, before school I play video games, uh my interest is for the police and my talents is on the internet and for the school and the mathematic, my favorite place is uh at the Biophare. My activities and sports is football, soccer and uh basketball a little bit. [What is the Biophare?] The Biophare is a place you go for see uh exposition for bird, uh amphibian and...*

In Story-Retell, ES regular students, with a mean score of 5.83, were able to retell a coherent version of the story mostly in English, giving most key elements of the story. They were able to give some details of the storyline and were able to react to the research assistant's questions when prompted. On the other hand, LS regular students, with average scores of 3.05, 3.21 and 3.39, were able to name the main characters but said little about key elements of the story. They often retold the story with frequent long pauses using single words to express their ideas. They were often unable to react to prompts.

Here are examples of students' oral production in the lower performing range in which the LS students had trouble retelling the story. Even when prompted by the research assistant (shown

as *I* in the transcripts), they had a difficult time following the prompt and responding to hints about the retelling. They seemed stressed and did not know what to say. They gave most of the information in French.

LS (AP score 2/12):*: uhm the...the cats uh like /.../ <I: uhum> uh...[mais sais pas comment /.../ dire] <I: okay try> try uh...uh! (both laugh)...[very long pause]...(both laugh)...[long pause]...uh the cat is uh...[very long pause]... I: No? Tell me about the sky... S: [mais je ne sais pas /.../ qui s'envolent] <I: okay>...<I: and then?>...[mais] haha (sounds nervous)the...the girl is uh...[very long pause]...(both laugh).../.../ uh...<I: okay and then? after? the end?> [bais] in the the room <I: okay> the uh cat is uh [mais je sais pas en anglais, il a peur?]...<I: don't worry> okay! [puis] uh [/.../ des eclairs mais] <I: okay /.../ End*

In contrast, the weak ES students were able to retell more of the story and reacted to prompting because they understood the research assistant's message.

ES(AP score 3/12):*. S:Is [tempête] is cat with grandmother With uh with uh uhm to the is [envolé] with solution to cat with uh. Cat is [peur] is [froid] With [bain] grandmother uh I:<Just tell me what you know, if you don't know some words don't worry> S:Yes. I:<Can you tell me more about the cats in the story?> S:Uh three cats I:<and what did they look like?> S: Is one orange, uh black uh yes [is tout]. I:<Can you remember how the story ends? How does it finish? Are they inside or outside?> S: uh is inside   is the end [bein is tout]*

The bar graph in Figure 1 shows the superior performance of regular ESs on both tasks.
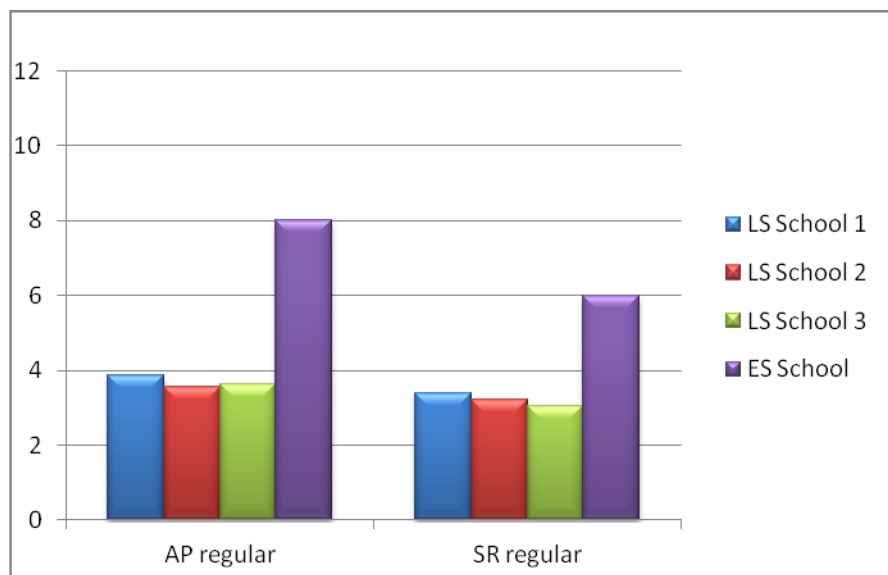
Figure 1: Regular LSs compared to ESs in two tasks, Audio-Pal and Story-Retell;

To answer Research Question 1, which asks if at the end of grade six, there is a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the regular ESL program as measured by the rating scores on AP and SR, the prediction that ES will have a small measurable advantage over LSs on both fluency measures is confirmed. Indeed, as we see in Figure 1, the regular ES group scores on Audio-Pal are twice those of late starters. The trend for ESs to outperform LSs on both tasks is clear although no statistical tests were run.

ORAL FLUENCY RATINGS OF INTENSIVE ES COMPARED TO LS

Rating Scale Findings. As we see in Table 4, intensive ESs also outperformed LSs on both Audio-Pal and Story-Retell tasks when measured with the White and Turner (2005) rating scales.

Table 4
Comparison of Intensive LS and ES in 2 Oral Tasks:
Audio-Pal and Story Retell*

	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Audio-Pal					
LS1	28	2	9	5.54	1.97
LS2	22	5	8	6.55	1.01
LS3	26	2	11	6.31	1.74
ES	24	8	12	10.46	1.44
Story-Retell					
LS1	28	2	10	5.96	2.08
LS2	22	4	10	6.48	1.54
LS3	26	4	12	6.88	1.61
ES	24	6	12	9.58	1.77

*Scores out of 12 using White and Turner (2005) scale

In Audio-Pal, the ES intensive students with an average score of 10.46 were easily capable of speaking about self in English. They spoke fairly fluently, gave a variety of information, used several language patterns and made few errors. LS intensive students, with average scores of 5.54, 6.31.and 6.55, spoke mostly English, gave at least three items of information, and produced sentences that followed one another without long hesitations.

In Story-Retell, ES intensive with an average score of 9.58 told a coherent story including all key elements (setting the scene, precipitating event and climax). They also provided details about the storyline. LS intensive students with average scores of 5.96, 6.48 and 6.88 also retold the story coherently with all key elements included, but the storyline elements were less detailed.

The prediction for RQ2, namely that the time added in grades one and two to the intensive group would not have a substantial impact at the end of intensive grade six, is not supported. Indeed, there is a trend towards superior performance by ES intensive students, as we can see in Table 4.
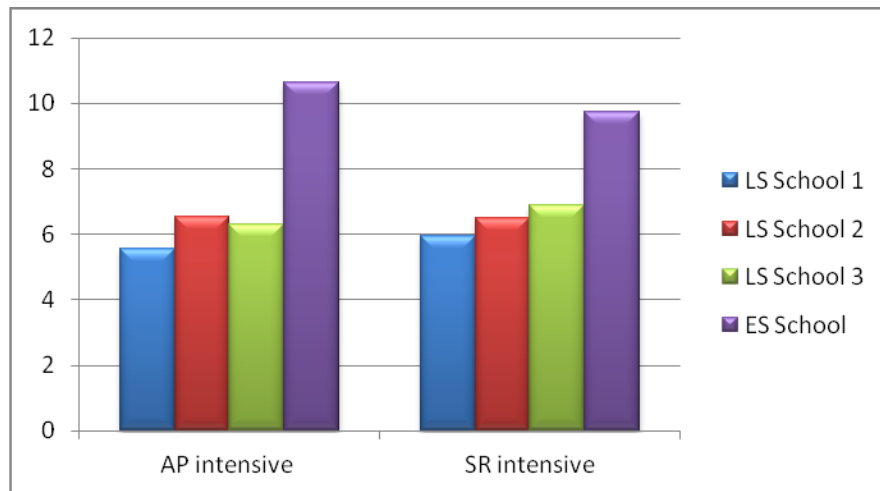
Figure 2: Intensive LSs compared to ESs in two tasks: Audio-Pal and Story-Retell

QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

To understand why ES students show higher results in the rating scales than LS students and how the differences manifest themselves in their discourse, I analysed the students' oral texts in several different ways.

This section will address the third and fourth research questions:

RQ3: At the end of grade 6 ESL, are there identifiable differences in oral discourse between regular Early Starters and Late Starters as they perform two oral tasks, Audio-Pal and Story-Retell?

RQ4: At the end of grade 6 ESL, are there identifiable differences in oral discourse between intensive Early Starters and Late Starters as they perform two oral tasks, Audio- Pal and Story-Retell?

In preparation for the discourse analyses, I transcribed the oral texts using Microsoft Word. I then removed instances of *uh* and *bein* and other filler words. This made it possible to count the total number of running words and to identify and delete the French words in order to calculate the number of English running words produced by each student in his or her oral production task. I then calculated the number of comprehensible idea units in each oral text. The texts were fed through Compleat Lexical Tutor (www.lextutor.ca) to obtain word type counts per intact classroom group. For this study, I chose the Vocab Profile Kids corpus, which identifies the use of the first 2500 most frequent words from a children's corpus and separates them into frequency bands of 250 families. In the tables below, they will be labelled in terms of Kid250. I also measured lexical variety per 100 words by using an equal number of words per class sample. Additionally, I calculated the variety of nouns, verbs, adjectives and function words. I wanted to compare the oral texts to the written texts produced by ES students who had gone through the cycle One ESL program, in which I had observed a wider variety and use of nouns, adjectives, verbs and function words when compared to LS students (Duguay, 2012).

Since no statistical tests were run, the discourse analysis findings report trends, not statistically significant differences.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS FINDINGS COMPARING REGULAR EARLY STARTERS TO REGULAR LATE STARTERS

Talking about self is probably the most important ability students can acquire as they begin their journey through ESL. In Audio-Pal, students had to talk about themselves for one minute; this is a topic that was, and still is, well practiced in classes around the province. The MEQ program in place at the time of the White and Turner study had as its objective to "*communicate orally in English in everyday classroom situations on familiar topics, independently and at an acceptable speed, using simple vocabulary and sentence structures.*" (MEQ, 1997 in White and Turner 2005, p. 509). The current MELS program (MELS, 2006, p.354) Competency One, To interact orally in English, states: *When they take the initiative to transmit oral messages in relevant situations, students may ask for help, request permission, express courtesy, agreement, needs, feelings and interests, as well as share personal experiences and research results.* As mentioned above, in Story-Retell, students watched a three minute segment of an NFB short movie about an old lady and her cats as they were caught in a sudden storm. Students had to retell the story to the researcher, who audio-recorded them. If necessary, they were prompted. They did not have a time constraint. Here are the results from the task in terms of running words, which are defined as the total number of words in a piece of discourse, in this case, both English and French words, and then, only the English words in the discourse.

Number of running words. Analysis of the Audio-Pal recordings shows that ESs produced more running words when speaking about self than their LS regular students counterparts. The same finding applies to the Story–Retell recordings, as can be observed in Table 5.

Table 5
Number of Running Words Produced per Students by Regular ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks*

Regular groups	*n*	Mean Words in text	Mean English	Min Eng	Max Eng	SD
Audio-Pal						
LS1	28	44	33.4	9	110	26.08
LS2	22	43.7	27.4	4	90	22.00
LS3	19	43.2	29.6	4	68	17.64
ES	18	83.3	70.3	36	164	28.69
Story-Retell						
LS1*	14	69.3	43.4	6	118	34.51
LS2	22	90.3	52.2	7	199	42.37
LS3	19	72	44.5	2	110	33.28
ES	18	123.3	106.9	36	266	52.53

* Data was only available for 14 students in the Story-Retell regular group LS1
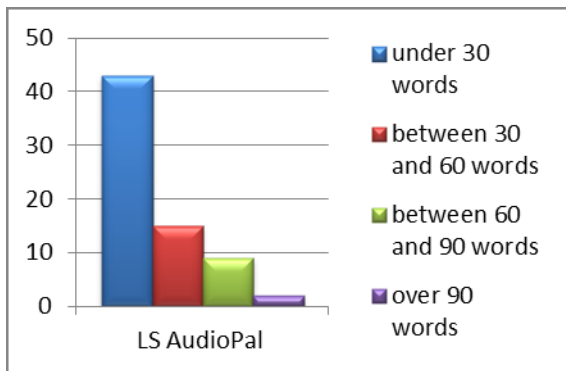
Figure 3: Number of English words used by regular LS in Audio-Pal
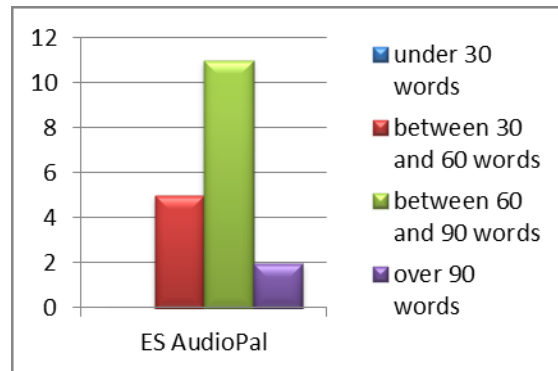
Figure 4: Number of English words used by regular ES in Audio-Pal

As we can see in Table 5 and Figures 3 and 4, in the Audio-Pal one-minute timed task for both groups, the ESs produced more running words than the LSs. While 72% of the ESs produced 60 running words or more, only 15 % of the LS were able to do so. The ES student who spoke the least, with 36 running words, had more language and was able to express more ideas than the lowest performing LS students in each group, who were only able to produce four to nine running words (Table 5, Figure 3). This ES student had also more language than the average of all three other groups (between 27 and 33 words). While many of the LS students produced one-word ideas (i.e. *skating, rollerblade*), the ES students were able to enrich the idea a bit more (i.e. *My favorite activity in the sport the soccer and the play tag*). In the LS groups, 43 students out of 69 (62%) produced fewer than 30 words. (The example has been edited to exclude the use of fillers such as *uh*.)

As we have shown in Table 5 and Figures 5 and 6, many LS students also found it difficult to retell the story after listening to the movie clip; 44% of the LS students used fewer than 30 running words to retell the story while all ES students had over 30 running words in their retelling. At the other end of the spectrum, 9% of the LS regular students used 90 running words or more in their texts while only 50% of the regular ES students did so. As they told their story, the ES students used an average of 106.9 running words, more than twice that of the three LS regular groups who used only an average of 43, 44 and 52 running words. The ES students produced more words to retell the same story, had quicker access to the vocabulary for the task and therefore, were more capable of providing a coherent description of the story. Their texts contained more key elements and they provided more details.
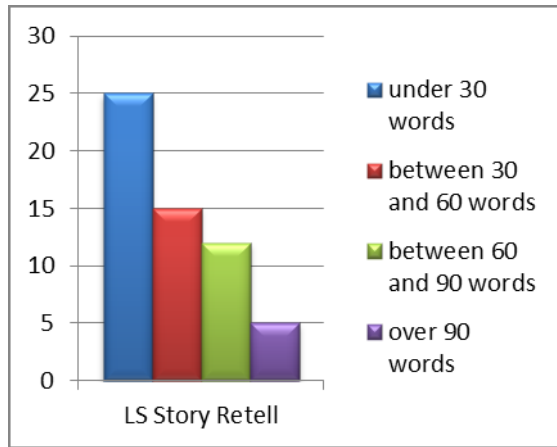
Figure 5: Number of English words used by regular LS in Story-Retell
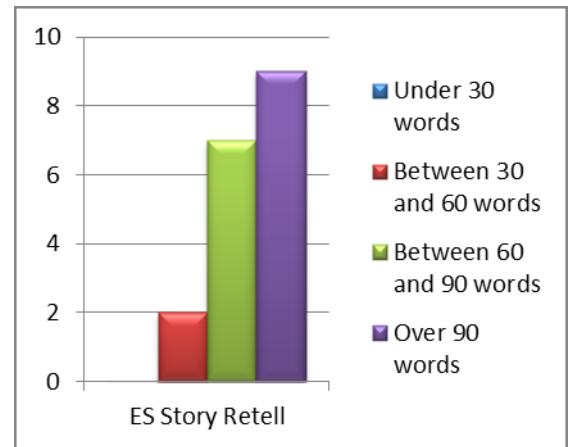
Figure 6: Number of English words used by regular ES in Story-Retell

Number of ideas: Table 6 shows the extent to which students could speak about themselves on a variety of topics in the Audio-Pal task. Most of the LS regular students (87%) were able to give one to six comprehensible ideas about themselves and 13 %were able to give seven or more ideas. In contrast, eight regular ES students (44%) produced between one to six ideas and ten students (56%) gave seven ideas or more.

Table 6
Number of Comprehensible Ideas per Text Excluding Name Produced by Regular ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks (percentage of students)

	n	1 to 3 ideas	4 to 6 ideas	7 to 9 ideas	10+ideas
Audio-Pal					
LS1	28	39	43	11	7
LS2	22	59	32	9	
LS3	19	52	37	11	
ES	18	11	33	28	28
Story-Retell					
LS1	14	72	14	14	
LS2	22	55	27	9	9
LS3	19	47	42	11	
ES	18	16	28	28	28

The same pattern can be observed for SR where most of the LS students (85%) are found in the one to six idea range and only 15% were able to produce more than seven comprehensible ideas. In contrast, the ES students (44%) are in the one to six idea range and 56% of students produced seven ideas or more.

Word Types. To determine lexical variety, I measured the students' language through the VPKids Corpus in Lextutor.ca, a corpus which was obtained from children's texts. I chose this corpus as it reflects language that is frequently used by native speakers of a similar age and with similar interests and knowledge of the world as the participants, which is probably more representative than measuring the participants against a scheme that reflects frequent words in adult usage. Words are measured by frequency of use for the first 2500 words of a children's corpus as this allows us to better observe the language growth in children's language. Two lexical variety measures were used. The first used one-minute samples of students' speech from Audio-Pal and the complete samples of the Story-Retell task (Table 7); the second used equal samples for all groups on each task to obtain a measure of lexical variety per 100 words (Table 8). These two tables show the variety of words used, represented in types (that is, counted only once whether used once or 100 times in the classroom group). Words from the same family (*learn, learner*) or words with different inflections (*learn, learns, learned*) were counted separately.

In Table 7, we can see that for Audio-Pal, ES students used a wider range of words in most of the Kid250 bands and in total (250 word types) when compared to the LS groups (122 to 177 word types). In Story-Retell, the ES students used a total of 290 word types to retell their story compared to 146 to 219 word types for their LS counterparts.

61

Table 7
Number of Word Types (VP Kids) Produced by Regular ESL Students during One Minute Samples in Audio-Pal and in Story-Retell Tasks

Kids250-	*n*	1	2	3	4	5 +	Off list	Total
Audio-Pal								
LS1	28	85	34	10	5	21	22	177
LS2	22	82	17	10	8	24	12	151
LS3	19	65	16	8	4	20	13	122
ES	18	124	33	16	15	23	39	250
Story-Retell								
LS1	14	86	23	9	4	14	6	146
LS2	22	113	30	20	7	20	20	219
LS3	19	89	22	15	6	17	10	163
ES	18	143	43	23	11	28	37	290

Table 8
Lexical Variety:
Number of Word Types (VP Kids) Produced by Regular ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks per 100 words

Kids250-	*n*	1	2	3	4	5 +	Off list	Total
Audio-Pal								
LS1	28	12.7	4.3	1.6	0.5	2.5	1.6	22.9
LS2	22	13.5	2.5	1.6	1.4	3.6	1.1	24.0
LS3	19	11.6	2.9	1.4	0.7	2.0	1.8	20.4
ES	18	16.6	3.8	0.9	1.8	2.0	2.3	27.4
Story-Retell								
LS1	14	14.1	3.8	1.5	0.7	2.3	0.8	23.2
LS2	22	14.6	2.8	2.1	1.0	1.8	1.5	23.8
LS3	19	12.3	3.3	2.1	0.8	1.8	1.1	21.4
ES	18	15.4	3.3	1.6	1.1	2.1	2.6	26.1

When we analyze the kinds of words regular students used in both tasks, we see that ESs used almost twice as many nouns, verbs, and function words as LSs (types), and they also used them twice as often (tokens) (Table 9). This ratio did not apply to adjectives, but nevertheless, ESs did use adjectives more often than the three other groups. One notable observation is that the ES group used function words 2.5 times more frequently in the oral texts than two of the LS groups. It is important to note, however, that without statistical tests, we cannot say whether or not these differences are significant.

Table 9
Word Count per Grammatical Category Produced by Regular ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks

	n	Nouns		Verbs		Adjectives		Function words	
		types	tokens	types	tokens	types	tokens	types	tokens
Audio-Pal									
LS1	28	65	219	29	237	28	64	26	181
LS2	22	43	122	29	119	19	36	21	84
LS3	19	34	125	19	148	20	47	21	94
ES	18	101	338	50	274	24	83	41	254
Story-Retell									
LS1	14	34	128	40	106	14	47	32	136
LS2	22	67	248	55	211	23	151	37	269
LS3	19	50	178	40	127	17	82	28	197
ES	18	90	357	82	369	30	155	49	495

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS FINDINGS COMPARING INTENSIVE EARLY STARTERS TO INTENSIVE LATE STARTERS

Similar comparisons to those outlined above were made for the intensive groups. We begin by reporting the findings for running words. As we see in Table 10, there are some differences among the LS classes. The LS3 group performs similarly to ES on both tasks, and on the SR task, the high standard deviation of LS2 indicates that there is a wide range of performance within that group. Thus, unlike the trend reported above for regular groups, there is no clear indication of a benefit for intensive ESs in their use of words in English on either the AP or the SR task.

Table 10
Number of Running Words Produced by Intensive ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks

	n	Mean Words in text	Mean English	Min. English	Max. English	SD
Audio-Pal						
LS1	28	77.6	59.5	28	111	24.09
LS2	22	83.9	70.5	35	128	20.11
LS3	26	94.8	83.6	37	164	27.04
ES	24	89.8	78.3	47	121	17.65
Story-Retell						
LS1	28	115.6	91.6	23	162	32.02
LS2	22	142.76	116.19	23	261	50.84
LS3	26	152.9	127.2	90	185	26.95
ES	24	142.8	133.9	82	215	31.00

When we compare the number of comprehensible ideas produced on the AP task (Table 11), we find that a higher percentage of ES students produced 10 or more comprehensible ideas than LS students (63% versus 18%, 9%, 45%) although again, there are differences among the LS groups.

The differences among LS groups are even more striking on the SR task. While 21% of the students in LS1 and 50% of the students in LS2 produced 10 or more comprehensible ideas, 92% of the students in LS3 produced 10 or more ideas. This was the same percentage as in the ES group. Since the LS groups do not perform similarly to each other, we cannot compare LSs to the ESs with respect to comprehensible ideas.

Table 11
Number of Comprehensible Ideas per Text Excluding Name Produced by Intensive ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks (percentage of students)

	n	1 to 3 ideas	4 to 6 ideas	7 to 9 ideas	10 to 12 ideas	13+ ideas
Audio-Pal						
LS1	28		36	46	14	4
LS2	22		32	59	9	
LS3	26		4	46	41	4
ES	24		4	33	42	21
Story-Retell						
LS1	28	4	32	43	7	14
LS2	22		14	36	23	27
LS3	26			8	38	54
ES	24			8	8	84

We turn now to lexical variety in terms of the distribution of word types as measured by VP Kids. As shown in Table 12, the distribution pattern suggests that there is more lexical variety in the AP and SR texts produced by the ES students in comparison to those produced by the LS1 and LS2 students. However, the patterns for the ES and LS3 groups are similar.

Table 12
Number of Word Types (VP Kids) Produced by Intensive ESL Students during Audio-Pal in one minute and Story-Retell Tasks

Kid250-	*n*	1	2	3	4	5+	Off list	Total
Audio-Pal								
LS1	28	118	49	29	16	35	22	269
LS2	22	107	33	15	7	19	28	209
LS3	26	139	48	28	12	34	44	303
ES	24	143	55	23	16	42	42	324
Story-Retell								
LS1	28	136	45	33	12	36	26	302
LS2	22	150	39	36	16	32	18	302
LS3	26	170	59	29	22	48	29	362
ES	24	169	61	37	18	40	38	366

When word types are analyzed per 100 words (Table 13), findings largely confirm the stronger performance of the ES students. This is particularly evident in the Audi-Pal task, where the ES learners use more types total and also more types from less frequent categories (see columns for 5+ and Off-list words). Results for the Story-Retell task also confirm the ES students' ability to use more varied words with a minor exception for the LS3 group, where overall lexical variety is slightly higher than that of the ES group. Given these findings and those of the other analyses above, we can conclude that the LS groups taken together are not performing as well as the ES learners.

Table 13
Lexical Variety: Number of Word Types, (VP Kids) Produced by Intensive ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks per 100 words

Kid250-	*n*	1	2	3	4	5+	Off list	Total
Audio-Pal								
LS1	28	7.4	3.0	1.6	0.9	1.7	1.0	15.6
LS2	22	6.9	2.1	0.9	0.5	1.2	1.2	13.7
LS3	26	7.5	2.6	1.2	0.5	1.7	1.7	15.2
ES	24	8.6	3.4	1.4	0.5	2.1	2.1	18.1
Story-Retell								
LS1	28	5.3	1.8	1.3	0.5	1.4	1.0	11.3
LS2	22	5.9	1.5	1.4	0.6	1.2	0.6	11.2
LS3	26	6.3	2.0	1.0	0.8	1.6	0.9	12.6
ES	24	5.9	2.0	1.3	0.6	1.5	1.1	12.4

Intensive student groups in this study produced a rich variety of words on the two tasks (Table 14). Noun types were found in similar numbers across the groups except for LS2 which used fewer nouns. The type-token ratio (TTR) for nouns (that is, how likely a word is to be repeated in the text) varies between 0.2 and 0.3. The verb analysis shows that the ES group used more verb types on both tasks than the other groups. Further exploration would tell us whether they used more inflected verb forms or rather, a greater variety of verbs. Overall, the groups are fairly similar in terms of noun, verb and adjective types and tokens on both tasks. However, when looking at the use of function words, we can observe once again the discrepancy between the LS1 and LS2 groups on the one hand, and the LS3 and ES groups on the other. The latter show both more variety in the type of function words used as well as a greater number of function tokens.

Table 14

Word Count per Grammatical Category Produced by Intensive ESL Students during Audio-Pal and Story-Retell Tasks

	n	Nouns		Verbs		Adjectives		Function words	
		types	tokens	types	tokens	types	tokens	types	tokens
Audio-Pal									
LS1	28	103	356	43	412	38	111	43	334
LS2	22	67	265	36	364	32	104	37	339
LS3	26	115	453	54	456	38	141	55	471
ES	24	136	433	61	432	45	138	53	418
Story-Retell									
LS1	28	102	498	72	461	43	249	42	646
LS2	22	91	456	85	442	37	134	48	700
LS3	26	113	537	108	632	35	189	65	946
ES	24	103	469	131	711	43	225	52	905

In summary, the regular ESs who began learning ESL in grade one with songs and stories outperformed the regular LS students reported by White and Turner (2005) on two oral production tasks, Audio-Pal and Story Retell. This finding answers Research Question 1, which asks if, at the end of grade six, there is a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the regular ESL program, as measured by the rating scales used in the earlier study.

Research Question 2 asks if, at the end of grade six, there is a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs with intensive ESL instruction, as measured by the rating scales for Audio Pal and Story Retell. Again, we see that the scores for the intensive ESs were higher than the scores for the LSs on these measures.

Research Question 3 asks whether there are identifiable differences in oral discourse between regular ESs and LSs at the end of grade 6 ESL as they perform the two oral tasks. We observed the following trends: the ESs students can express more ideas about themselves, retell a more complete story, use a wider variety of words, and use them more frequently, to express themselves on both tasks. They produce more types and tokens in almost every grammatical category. They also seem to be more at ease when talking to a research assistant.

Research Question 4 asks whether there are identifiable differences in oral discourse between intensive ESs and LSs at the end of grade 6 ESL as they perform the two oral tasks. We found that the trends are not as clear as for the regular groups. There were a number of differences among the LS groups, and in some analyses (e.g. number of comprehensible ideas, number of words produced in the task, lexical variety) the LS3 group was more similar to the ES group than to the other two LS groups.

In Chapter 5, these findings will be discussed and related to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This study addresses the broad question about the impact of additional hours in elementary school in grades one and two on the oral fluency performance at the end of grade six in the regular and intensive ESL programs when the early pedagogy involves a flood of songs and stories with recurrent patterns. Given the MELS decision to implement ESL classes in grades one and two with an age-appropriate program of songs and stories with recurrent passages, in light of the literature review discussed in chapter two, and the elements described in the results section, we will discuss RQ1 and RQ3 about the ES regular learners compared to the LS regular learners, and then RQ2 and RQ4 about the ES intensive learners compared to the LS intensive learners. This will be followed by the limitation of this study and observations about the use of the rating scales.

EARLY STARTER REGULAR STUDENTS COMPARED TO LATE STARTER REGULAR STUDENTS

Research Question One. The first research question asked whether at the end of grade six, there would be a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the regular ESL program, when measured by the rating scores on Audio-Pal and Story-Retell. The prediction that ESs in regular ESL would have a small measurable advantage over LSs on both fluency measures was confirmed. The effect was actually stronger than expected as the regular ES group scores were almost double those of the LSs (Table 3). On the AP task, in which students were speaking about themselves, their friends and their interests, the three groups of regular LSs had mean scores of 3.55, 3.63 and 3.86. These scores indicate texts with few sentence patterns, fewer than three items of information, long hesitations and limited use of English. In contrast, most regular ES students

were able to talk about themselves fluently in the one minute AP task. They obtained strong results with a mean score of 8.0 (Table 3). The AP rating scale (Appendix B) indicates that a student with this score would produce a text that is mostly in English, has at least three items of information and contains a variety (two+) of sentence patterns. Sentences would follow one another without long hesitations even though they contain errors (White & Turner, 2005).

On the SR task, students had to watch a short video and retell the story. The LS students, with average scores of 3.05, 3.21 and 3.39 (see SR rating scale in Appendix C), were able to name the main characters in English but seemed to lack the L2 vocabulary in order to verbalize and structure their ideas and talk about the key elements of the story. They often retold a limited version of the story, used single words to express their ideas, used many French words, and had frequent long pauses. Because of the French they used in the task, we know that they understood the task at hand, but many LSs could not produce it in their L2 and expressed frustration through the pauses. Also, when the interviewers gave students prompts so they could formulate their ideas, they were often unable to react to them. As they had been learning ESL for three years (216 hours), we can associate this group with a comment made by Pfenninger (2014) that students who have received minimal exposure to the target language will be more at risk of not seeing progress over time, which may lead to frustration in learning. For the SR task, regular ES students were able to remember the main sequences of the story, to retell a coherent version of the story mostly in English, giving most key elements of the story. They were able to give some details of the storyline and were generally comfortable in reacting to the research assistant's questions when prompted, to achieve mean scores of 5.83 on the SR rating scale. They were more confident, produced more words in the same amount of time, had quicker access to the

vocabulary for the task and therefore, were more capable of giving a coherent description of the story. Their texts contained more key elements and they provided more details.

As we saw in Figure 1, there is a clear difference in favor of ESs between the performance of regular LSs and ESs on the AP and the SR tasks. The difference allows us to answer Research Question One with confidence at the end of grade six, regular ESs outperform regular LSs on two measures of oral fluency. These results support the pedagogical approach recommended in the MELS Cycle One ESL program for grades one and two, which involves exposure to songs and stories and in which students sing songs, listen to stories, talk about the texts and retell the stories. Clearly this seems to have had positive effects on the L2 oral fluency of the ES learners. There is support for this finding in the literature review, where we saw that, DeKeyser (2000) and Spada (2015) have noted the benefits of songs and stories in the early classroom. Romney, Romney and Braun (1988), Elley (1989, 1991), Blok (1999), and Wiggins (2007) found that when songs and stories were combined with production practices that involve either singing, repeating familiar stories, or talking about texts, there may be easier access to story structure and vocabulary, this has a positive effect on the learners' fluency in elementary.

However, these results contradict the previous studies and research overviews that tell us that classroom time added in early grades does not result in a higher level of proficiency and is unlikely to have a long term effect on the oral development at the end of regular grade six (DeKeyser, 2003; Muñoz, 2006; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Pfenninger, 2014; Spada, 2015). Many authors have argued that ESL presented an hour or two a week for a total of 40 to 80 hours a year, which is the case in the current study, was not very efficient or conducive to promoting oral fluency for learners (Collins, Halter, Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Mora, 2006; Muñoz, 2012; Netten and Germain, 2012; White and Turner, 2005;). Netten and Germain (2004) noted

that students who had limited time for learning a second language seemed to develop declarative knowledge about how the language works but did not acquire intuitive knowledge where they could actually use the language. Students who did not have enough time to use the language were not cognitively challenged in their learning, were not able to use the language, and were unmotivated and discouraged as they did not perceive progress in their learning. These results were caused by the conditions in which students had to learn and not their inability to learn. The students described by Netten and Germain seem to have had the same challenges as the LSs from the White and Turner (2005) study, many of whom, despite three years of ESL, were minimally capable of talking about themselves for a minute.

Having claimed that the limited time given to ESs in the early grades one and two offered strong positive results, we will address question three, which refers to the regular students' oral discourse.

Research Question Three. RQ3 addresses the identifiable differences in oral discourse between regular Early Starters and Late Starters at the end of grade six ESL as they perform the two timed oral tasks, Audio-Pal and Story-Retell. The prediction that ESs in regular ESL contexts would express more comprehensible ideas and use more vocabulary in both AP and SR tasks is supported. The most striking finding is the proportion of ES students who manage to rise to produce more advanced language. Whereas only 15% of LSs were able to produce 60 words or more in AP when talking about self, the subject they should know the best, 72% of the ES students managed to do so. The student with the shortest text, with 36 English words in the ES group had more words than the average of each of the three LS groups. As the vocabulary size increases, a child can express his needs and wants, has more control over the development of

relationships he can have, and can think and communicate his ideas more precisely (Roessingh and Elgie, 2009).

On the SR task, 44% of the LS students produced fewer than 30 English words to retell the story while only 9% of the students produced more than 90 words. In the ES group, no student produced fewer than 30 words while 50 % of the students produced more than 90 words. The ES students had extensive exposure to songs and stories during these two years. As Elley (1991) pointed out, books offer high vocabulary input, allow repetition of recurrent passages, key words, and events and allow the possibility of participating in simple discussions. Elley (1989) and Fondas (1992) both mentioned that vocabulary acquisition was higher when learners discussed the words and ideas from the texts than when there was no discussion, something I have observed as well in my own ESL classes. During the vocabulary teaching time, ES students often intervene to discuss a personal link with the words, "*Me two brother". "Look! Loose tooth!" "Dad, motorcycle*".

As ESs used more words overall, they were also capable of generating more comprehensible ideas. Table 6 shows that there is a clear difference in the number of ideas that can be produced by ES and LS regular students. The majority of LSs (87%) produced one to six ideas while most ESs (77%) produced four to nine ideas. While 56% of the ESs produced seven comprehensible ideas or more, only 9% of the LSs managed to do so.

These results are in line with De Bot (2014), who found that early starters in implicit learning conditions improved significantly in vocabulary (see also De Keyser, 2000, Larson-Hall, 2008 and Nikolov, 1999).

In language learning, age can be a positive factor when it is associated with enough high quality exposure (Muñoz, 2008; Pfenninger, 2014). Early ESL classes are intended not only to expose young learners to the language but also to help them build motivation and positive attitudes towards it (Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006).

But age-appropriate pedagogy is also important. Tragant Mestres and Lundberg (2011) observed that ESs enjoyed a variety of activities such as TPR, songs and rhymes, picture books and everyday talk. In this study, ESs' success with oral language acquisition may have much to do with their deep engagement (Pfenninger, 2014) in the oral-based communicative approach. They lived the language in songs, as they sang songs cheerfully over and over; they were interested in sharing the stories and retelling them in various way. Also significant is the fact that they were emotionally involved in the texts and were making connections to them in the L2.

When we look at lexical variety measured against the children's corpus, we find that, in the VPkids250-1 most frequent word range (see Table 7), the ESs use 1.5 times more word types than the LS groups on both tasks. ESs use function words from 2 to 2.5 times more often than the three LS groups (see Table 9). ESs also used almost twice as many noun and verb types for both the AP and SR tasks and twice as many adjectives for the SR task. With these figures in mind, we find that there are identifiable differences in discourse between the regular ESs and LSs. They can be verified in terms of number of comprehensible ideas, higher count of running word in speech samples, and wider lexical variety including more nouns, verbs, adjectives and function words. Contrary to what was reported in the studies cited earlier, the data collected for this study show evidence of a higher level of oral development in grade 6 for regular students who have followed the MELS ESL Cycle One program. Regular ESs had an identifiable advantage over regular LSs on both AP and SR fluency measures. The 104 hours of added ESL time distributed

75

over three years has helped raise the language baseline for the majority of ES students such that they could rise to the challenge and accomplish the two oral tasks. The claim by Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2006) that there needs to be a focus on the quality and amount of input and interaction inside the classroom, there needs to be quality teaching by proficient users of the language, age-appropriate methodology, and a primary focus on meaning, seems to apply to this context. Despite the limited amount of time devoted to the teaching and learning of the L2, English, the ESs made important progress in their second language learning. We would claim that it is a result of the exposure to English through songs and stories.

EARLY STARTER INTENSIVE STUDENTS COMPARED TO LATE STARTER INTENSIVE STUDENTS

Research Question Two. This question was the following: At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs with intensive ESL instruction, as measured by the White and Turner (2005) rating scales on AP and SR? This rating scale was used to compared the performance of grade six students with intensive instruction who began learning English in grade one to the performance of those who began learning English in grade four. The prediction for RQ2, namely that the time added in grades one and two to the intensive group would not have substantial impact at the end of intensive grade six, is not supported. While in the absence of statistical tests we cannot confirm that these differences are significant, we see a trend towards superior performance by ES intensive students on the two oral tasks (see Table 4 and Figure 2). The trend is somewhat stronger on Audio-Pal. On this task, the LS intensive students had average scores of 5.54, 6.31.and 6.55 out of a total of 12 while the ES students

scored an average of 10.46. The scores suggest that the ESs were more confident in speaking about themselves, gave more information, used a greater variety of language patterns, and made fewer errors than the LSs.

In Story-Retell, the LS intensive students, with average scores of 5.96, 6.48 and 6.88, retold the story coherently including all key elements. The ESs with an average score of 9.58 also told a coherent story with all key elements, but they provided more details than the LSs about the storyline.

The results found in the intensive classrooms in this study seem to contradict the literature that states that time added in the Cycle One program to ESs (see Table 1), in this case the 76 hours of distributed time in grades one and two at the rate of an hour a week, should not make a difference at the end of intensive grade six, where students learn much more in an intensive format than in a drip feed context (Lightbown and Spada, 1989, 1991, 1994; Germain, Netten and Movassat, 2004; MacFarlane, 2005; Netten and Germain, 2012; Serrano, 2012; White and Turner 2005; Collins and White, 2011). Indeed, the advantage shown for the ES intensive students on the rating scales is consistent with Pfenninger (2014), who found that that given a young starting age, implicit learning followed by long and massive exposure can lead to higher levels of second language proficiency.

Research Question Four: To answer RQ4 which asks if at the end of grade six intensive ESL there are identifiable differences in discourse between ESs and LSs, we need to remember that, in this study, IES students have 76 hours more learning time added in grades one and two in early elementary school. In these conditions, how does the oral discourse of the ES and LS students differ?

In Chapter 4, we sometimes found similarities between one or two of the LS groups and ES group. For example, the intensive ES group and the LS3 produced average speech sample lengths that are comparable with respect to the mean number of English words (Table10). Although the shortest SR texts in the LS1 and LS2 groups contained only 23 English words, the LS3 and ES groups are similar to each other, with 90 and 82 English words respectively. These two last figures seem more representative than the others of the expectation for performance after 400 hours of intensive English instruction, where the goal is for students to be functional and to express themselves with ease and confidence in the second language in everyday life situations (MEQ *et al.*, 2001, as cited in White and Turner, 2012).

When we look at the number of comprehensible ideas produced on the AP task (Table 11), we see that a similar percentage of students in the LS1 (82%) and LS2 (91%) groups produced fewer than ten comprehensible ideas. However, a higher percentage of students in LS3 (45%) and ES (63%) produced ten or more comprehensible ideas. On the SR task, 75% of the LS1 students were below the ten idea range (75%) while the three other groups were above the ten idea range (LS2, 50%; LS3, 92%; ES, 92%).

With respect to lexical variety (see Tables 12 and 13), we can observe the same pattern: LS1 and LS2 students use fewer word types than the LS3 and ES groups, who resembled each other. The descriptive data show a trend in favor of the ESs.

In the word count per grammatical category (Table 14), however, the results are not as differentiated.

Richness of vocabulary can be described as the use of low–frequency vocabulary. Whereas a student with a limited vocabulary would use the word *tree*, in the same context a

student with a richer vocabulary could express more variety or detail by using words such as *branch, leaves, log, stump, twig, bark* or *tree* (Roessingh and Elgie, 2009). However, at the early stages of learning English, richness may also mean going beyond the early telegraphic style language by using more function words from the most frequent word categories (1K-2K) in a sentence to get a more precise message across.

On AP, the ESs used a wider variety of noun, verb, and adjective types than the LS groups and a similar number of different function word types as LS3. On SR, ESs used more verb types and tokens than the LSs while LS3 used more noun and function word types and tokens. On this task, LS1 achieved comparable results to ES in terms of noun and adjective types and tokens. Overall when we look at the tokens for most word categories, we find that ES and LS3 are comparable to each other and are stronger than the two other groups.

To summarize the intensive data collected for this study, we can say that the LS1 and LS2 groups produced shorter speech samples that contained fewer comprehensible ideas, showed less lexical variety, and fewer words from different grammatical categories than the LS3 and the ES groups. The differences between the two intensive groups LS3 and ES were smaller than those between the other two LS groups.

Why did one of the late start groups perform similarly to the early start group and differently from the other late start groups? One explanation is the teacher's use of English: the LS3 and ES intensive groups had teachers who conducted their classes in English 100% of the time. Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2006) noted the positive effect of quality of teaching and teacher proficiency on learner outcomes. Another explanation is outside exposure to English. According to White and Turner (2005), 62% of the students in LS3 spoke English with friends

outside of the classroom sometimes or often, while only 20% of the LS1 and LS2 groups reported speaking English outside school sometimes or often. In the ES intensive group, only 20% of the students claimed to sometimes have contact outside the classroom with English language speakers. Because the LS3 group had more opportunities to speak English outside the school than the other LS groups, it may explain their stronger performance. It may also help understand why there are identifiable differences in the discourse between the three LS groups.

I conclude that the benefits of the time spent in grades one and two with pedagogy related to songs and stories with recurrent passages in an English atmosphere are shown in the performance of the intensive ES group. They outperformed the LS1 and LS2 groups on many measures despite their limited contact with English outside the classroom.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Participants. The intensive Early Starter group was an intact intensive taught by a colleague. I taught the regular program students during most of their elementary years; they were in two different classes and were the children who brought back their signed parental consent forms (see Participants). As there was only one regular and one intensive ES group of participants, the claims about pedagogy may not be generalizable beyond my own teaching context. In comparison, the White and Turner (2005) study had three groups of each regular and intensive from three different Québec regions. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, the within-and between-group differences in the LS classes made it difficult to compare these learners to the ESs.

Instructional Issues. As ESL program was compulsory and was implemented throughout the province, designating a control group of Early Starters that did not follow the program would have been unethical. In the absence of such a control group receiving traditional or communicative language training without songs and stories, it is not possible to say that the positive effects observed for the ESs are due to the type of instruction and not to the added time. In other words, there is a confound between type of instruction and additional time. Factors related to the teachers, their enthusiasm for teaching ESL, their enthusiasm for the songs and stories, emphasis on speaking English in the classroom from day one, and many others could have influenced the results of this study. There can certainly be differences between expected and actual teaching practices, so different outcomes could be observed if other classes were measured.

Inter-Rater Reliability. Even though we compared our findings with the White and Turner (2005) rating scale results when establishing our inter-rater reliability and compared texts from the two cohorts when in doubt, there may have been differences in the ratings in the ratings in the two studies. In an ideal situation, we would have re-rated the audio-recordings from the White and Turner (2005) study to make comparisons, but this was beyond the scope of the thesis. Because we achieved results that were consistent with those in White and Turner during the rating training and during the common ratings, we believe our results are fairly close to those of the original study.

Another limitation concerns the lexical variety calculations. Muñoz (2006, citing Ure, 1971) defined lexical density as the proportion of content words as opposed to function words, which could be used as a measure of lexical richness. She noted that it does not seem to be a good measure for low-level learners as many beginners use mostly telegraphic speech which is

81

characterized by the overuse of content words and the underuse of function words; for this reason, this measure was not used in the thesis research. However, in retrospect, ., the proportion of content words to function words could show growth of the language as, by the end of grade six, many students have gone from speaking and writing in telegraphic style to making simple sentences that incorporate more function words in their discourse. This would be relevant in comparisons between LSs and ESs, and it raises a question about the appropriateness of measuring the lexical variety in terms types per 100 words (see Table 8). To calculate this 100-word measure, we need similar size samples from the ES and the LS groups. Because of the individual text sizes, this would require five or six LS AP texts to compare with two ES texts and this may have been a problem. As a consequence, the variety of language from the stronger groups is under-represented, the variety of frequent words such as verbs and function words is concentrated, and many words from the ES group are deleted while the LS low-level learners keep the variety of all the words they used even if they spoke mostly in telegraphic style. This means that the measuring technique may have underestimated the lexical variety of the ES speech. In this case, ES students (AP: 27.4, SR: 26.1) had only slightly higher results for word variety per 100 words than the LS students (AP: 22.9, 24.0, 20.4, SR: 23.2, 23.8, 21.4) despite the stronger text (according to other measures) they had produced. Therefore, I question the appropriateness of this measure when comparing these two levels of learners where one level is still mostly telegraphic.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE RATING SCALES

Hesitation is considered a primary factor in the Story-Retell scale, but not in the Audio-Pal scale. In other words, when students hesitate during the SR task, it has a bigger impact on their rating than when students hesitate during the Audio-Pal task. But do students only hesitate for lack of words, or could they be thinking about ideas? Perhaps a future study could give the same weight to the hesitation factor in both scales for consistency of analysis and rating of the students' fluency.

It would also be interesting to add a criterion that refers to teachers' prompts - e.g. whether the students can retell the story with few prompts from the interviewer or whether they need prompts in order to convey an idea. As students refer to peers and teachers to ask for help as a compensatory strategy in the classroom, they do it naturally when tested.

In Chapter 6, I will discuss the pedagogical implications for language teachers and the future directions for research.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The goal of this thesis study was to document the oral proficiency of ES students at the end of Cycle Three (grade six) in instructional contexts where the guidelines from the MELS Elementary ESL programs are followed. As a strong emphasis is put on developing students' oral ability, it is of particular interest to be able to document the progress made by the early starters who began learning English with the songs and stories in the Cycle One ESL program. In this study we had two important variables: first, a limited time input of an hour a week in an early setting, namely grades one and two, and second, a pedagogical effect related to the use of songs and stories from the early English L1 repertoire. This led to a broad question with four specific research questions - two about the fluency and two about the discourse.

The broad question is: Are there measurable long-term effects of a pedagogy that involves a flood of songs and stories with recurrent patterns in grades one and two on the oral performance of students at the end of grade six?

Questions about the long-term effects of the Cycle One song and story program on oral fluency:

RQ1. At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the regular ESL program, as measured by the rating scores on AP and SR?

RQ2. At the end of grade six, is there a difference in oral fluency between ESs and LSs in the intensive program, as measured by the rating scores on AP and SR?

Questions about the long-term effects of the Cycle One song and story program on discourse:

RQ3. At the end of grade six regular ESL, are there identifiable differences in discourse between ESs and LSs?

RQ4. At the end of grade six intensive ESL, are there identifiable differences in discourse between ESs and LSs?

The present study found that the extra ESL time added in grades one and two was well spent. Both the regular and intensive ES groups are more fluent than the LS groups at the end of grade six, as rated with the White and Turner (2005) rating scales. Through these language measures, we were able to map out the language profile of the new breed of grade six learners and identify the long-term effects and the oral language growth trends as two different cohorts were analysed. Regular ES students were able to express more comprehensible ideas than LS students, they produced more running words and used more word types (Tables 5-10), that, while not necessarily grammatically correct, were understandable by a native speaker of English. Through these measures, we observed that most ES students can now perform these AP and SR tasks, and we claim that the base level of ESL at the end of grade six has been raised through the MELS Cycle One ESL program.

The language analysis provided information about the number of words produced by students, their lexical variety and grammatical categories in their oral texts. These analysis allowed us to see that regular early starters not only used more varied words than late starters, but that they also used them more often, almost twice as often in many of the word categories. The ES intensive students outperformed the LS1 and LS2 groups on most measures, and they performed as well, or better than the LS3 group. Despite the fact that the LS3 group had much more contact with English outside the classroom than the other groups, the ES group reached similar levels of language performance within the classroom context.

The L2 literature often does not perceive limited time distributed over grades one and two as an efficient use of resources (Collins and White, 2011; DeKeyser, 2003; Muñoz, 2006; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Pfenninger, 2014; Spada, 2015). However, this is the allotted time that schools and teachers have to work with in the province of Québec and in many other places around the world. In our interconnected world, students and parents have high expectations towards ESL. An all-English classroom with an effective song and story pedagogy in place (Tragant Mestres and Lundberg, 2011), can help maximize this time and create a rich implicit learning environment (De Keyser, 2000; Larson-Hall, 2008; Nikolov, 1999). By participating in a variety of activities involving songs and rhymes, picture books, TPR, and everyday talk (De Bot, 2014), young learners will be able to embrace the language in an active, motivating and joyful atmosphere (Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006) and will rise to meet high teacher expectations.

Pedagogical Implications for Language Teachers: My motto as a teacher has always been that students cannot rise to low expectations. As we bring songs and stories to the Cycle One classroom, we also introduce essential knowledge to those learning a language. Numbers, letters, colours, food, clothing, people, places, descriptions, animals, transportation and nouns, adjectives, verbs and function words are all integrated in a rich lively linguistic environment. Repeating songs with actions allows young learners to all "speak" together in English with much less stress than is normally involved in a new accomplishment. Early on, the brave ones in my classroom try to use a few other words to add to the conversation, but everyone is mouthing a lot of words in English. The stories allow the learners to "speak" recurrent passages and re-use them elsewhere, which they find *"not so scary after all" (from Thompson, L. Mouse's First Halloween).* The early language start contributes to the learners' positive attitudes and motivation

to learn the language, which can be seen not necessarily through the actual early gains but through their willingness to keep on learning. In this early ESL classroom, there is no testing but we use lots of checklists. As leaders of this vivacious crowd, we must be attentive and stay enthusiastic teachers, focus on classroom observation rather than paper testing (often inappropriate for the age group) to keep this initial language energy flowing (Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006).

As mentioned above, the MELS Cycles Two and Three ESL program (grades three through six) emphasizes the importance of oral production as the base of ESL competencies. As students are learning to interact in oral tasks in English, they are asked to react to messages, take the initiative to transmit oral messages and maintain oral interaction using strategies. They use functional language (e.g. It's your turn. Can you repeat please?),and strategies, participate in exchanges, and pronounce clearly. The expected outcomes at the end of regular elementary grade six, that is, after about 300 hours of English, provide important indications about what students should be able to do in English when they enter secondary school.

> At the end of Elementary grade six, students show confidence and autonomy: they interact more spontaneously and effectively (reacting to messages, initiating messages, maintaining interaction). The exchanges stem from any classroom situation and are more sustained. They may be spontaneous or initiated by the teacher. Students make creative use of a wide range of functional language and communicate personal messages more easily. They correctly use the functional language frequently employed in class, with a pronunciation that can be understood by an English speaker. They frequently use appropriate compensatory and learning strategies. They seek help from peers and not as often from the teacher. They select and make use of available visual support and linguistic resources (MELS Cycles Two and Three ESL program (2001, p.355).

> The results of this thesis study indicate that the outcomes of this program are attainable.

When teachers believe that there is potential with implicit learning through songs and stories, they start looking for a variety of children's songs and books their students will enjoy. They

identify the essential keywords to make the song or story comprehensible. Finding a professional sharing group of other teachers, is a good way to build a great song and story repertoire of resources and activities. Believing that children can function in an English environment is also a good start. Then we need to create it and work hard on protecting this special English space. Most discipline problems can be solved with a simple "no" and a smile, which saves the English sanctuary. As time is limited, we need to make the most of it. When the children see that we believe that they can, in fact, function in an English environment, they usually rise to the challenge. By providing teacher training, support and follow-up, schools will ensure that students get the richest learning environment possible.

Future directions: Despite the deficit in instructional time allocated to learning ESL in the francophone school system, high school graduates need to be able to function in French and in English to pursue college and university studies and to compete in the job market with their bilingual, trilingual and multilingual peers. This research sends a positive message about what can be done with young learners in a limited time context with varied resources that can be accessible to most classes. The results of this study point to the need for more research on optimising teaching techniques for younger learners and on the best ways to enhance language learning from books to provide the highest level of exposure from early literature. As many L2 and foreign language classes are dealing with limited exposure, it would also be interesting to look at the impact of different teaching practices. There could also be more research on evaluation tools and measures that allow the analysis of oral data from young or early learners.

The data collected for this study are rich and provide the basis for a number of other studies. For example, we could study in greater depth the vocabulary and the grammar used in the tasks, as well as the verb tenses and inflections, phrasal verbs, pronouns and possessive determiners. As this study had a limited number of participants, it could be interesting to compare these results with those of other groups, possibly in areas where all students have access to intensive instruction. We could also look at the long term development of the oral language of students who started ESL in grade one at the end of secondary five, an interesting possibility as the first students with this profile are rapidly getting to the end of high school.

We also need classroom studies on the effects of good practices using children literature such as readers' theatre, literature circles, mentor texts, and other pedagogies that can maximize classroom input in limited time conditions.

This study is the first to provide empirical results on the long-term effects of the MELS Cycle One ESL program. It adds to the anecdotal reports that students speak English more confidently at the end of grade six regular and intensive classes than they did at the time of the White and Turner study (2005, 2012).

REFERENCES

Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M. (1991). Conditions of vocabulary acquisition. In R. Barr, M. Kamil,

    P. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 2, pp. 789-814).

    New York: Longman.

Beck I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2001). Text talk: Capturing the benefits of read-aloud experiences

    for young children. *The Reading Teacher, 55*(1), 10-20.

Blok, H. (1999). Reading to young children in educational settings: A meta-analysis of recent

    research. *Language Learning*, 49(2), 343-371.

Chen H.-C., & Leung Y.S. (1989) Patterns of lexical processing in a non-native language.

    Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory & Cognition, 15(2), 316-325.

Collins, L., Halter, R., Lightbown P., & Spada N. (1999). Time and the distribution of time in L2

    instruction. *TESOL Quarterly,* 33(4), 655-680.

Collins L., & White J. (2011). An intensive look at intensity and language learning. *TESOL*

    Quarterly, 45(1), 106-133.

Collins, L., White, J., Trofimovitch, P., Cardoso, W., & Horst, M. (2012). When comprehensible

    input is not comprehensive input: A multi-dimensional analysis of instructional input in

    intensive English as a foreign language. In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Intensive Exposure Experiences*

    in Second Language Learning, (pp.66-87). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

De Bot, K. (2014). The effectiveness of early foreign language learning in the Netherlands.

    Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching, 4(3) 409-418.

DeKeyser, R. (2000). The robustness of critical period effects in second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 22(4) 499-534.

DeKeyser, R. (2003). Implicit and explicit learning. In C. J. Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds). *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp.313-348) Oxford: Blackwell.

Drew, L. (Animator/ Director). (1988). The Dingles [Motion Picture from the book by Levchuck, H., & Bianchi J.]. Canada. National Film Board of Canada. Available from http://www.nfb.ca/film/dingles/download/

Duguay, H. (2011). What is the effect of starting English with stories and songs on narrative writing? A classroom observation report. Unpublished course paper. Department of Education. Concordia University, Montreal.

Duguay, H. (2012). Interesting facts about ESL language development in Elementary. presented at the SPEAQ convention in 2012 in Québec city.

Duguay, H., & White, J. (2011). From "Reach for the sky" to grade 6. How does the Elementary Cycle One program impact the development of Elementary ESL? presented at the SPEAQ convention in 2011 in Montreal.

Editeur officiel du Québec (2013). Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education, Education Act, article 22, August 1, 2013. Available from http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca

Éditeur officiel du Québec.(1977). La langue d'enseignement. Charte de la langue française. Chapitre VIII, Available from http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca

Elley, W.B.(1989). Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories, *Reading Research Quarterly* 24(2), 174-187.

Elley, W.B., (1991). Acquiring literacy in a second language: The effect of Book-Based Programs. *Language Learning,* 41(3), 375-411.

Evanie, M. (Teleplay). (1990). *Arnold of the ducks* [Animated cartoon]. United States: Columbia Broadcasting System.

Fallon, G., & Rublik, N. (2012). Second-language education policy in Quebec: ESL teachers' perceptions of the effects of the Policy of English as a compulsory subject at the early primary level. *TESL Canada Journal,* 29(2), 58-73.

Fondas, L. B. (1992). The acquisition of vocabulary from reading stories aloud, Florida: Nova University.

Germain C., Netten, J., & Movassat, P. (2004). L'Évaluation de la production orale en français intensif : critères et résultats. *La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes,* 60(3), 309-332.

Germain, C., Lightbown, P., Netten, J., & Spada, N. (2004). Intensive French and intensive English: Similarities and differences. *The Canadian Modern Language Review,* 60 (3), 409-430.

Gromko, J.E. (2005). The effect of music instruction on phonemic awareness in beginning readers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 53(3), 199-209.

Harley, B., & Hart, D. (1997). Language aptitude and second language proficiency in classroom learners of different starting ages. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19*, 379-400.

Holmstrand, L.S.E. (1982). English in the Elementary School. Stockholm/Uppsala: Almqvist& Wiksell International.

Horst, M. (2009). Revisiting classrooms as lexical environments. In T. Fitzpatrick & A. Bartfield (Eds.). *Lexical Processing in Second Language Learners: Papers and Perspectives in Honour of Paul Meara*. (p. 8): Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Horst, M., White, J., Cobb, T.,& Martini, J. (2011). How many words do secondary students know and are they the right words? PowerPoint retrieved from the 2011 SPEAQ Convention files, Montreal.

Koponen M., & Riggenbach, H. (2000). Overview: Varying perspectives on fluency. In H. Riggenbach (Ed.), *Perspectives on Fluency,* (pp 5-24) Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Krashen, S., Long, M., & Scarcella, R. (1979). Age, rate and eventual attainment in second language acquisition. TESOL Quarterly 9, 573-582.

Laberge, H. (2005). L'enseignement de l'anglais en première année. *Nouvelles CSQ*, 20-21.

Lamb, S.J., & Gregory, A.H. (2006). The relationship between music and reading in beginning readers. *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 13(1), 19-27.

Larson-Hall, J. (2008). Weighing the benefits of studying a foreign language at a younger starting age in a minimal input situation. *Second Language Research*, 24(1), 35-63.

LeBlanc D., & LeBlanc Y. (1980). Lire pour les élèves, en immersion comme en langue maternelle. *Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes*, 36, 617-629.

Lightbown, P.M. (2000). Anniversary article Classroom SLA research and second language teaching. *Applied Linguistics,* 21(4), 431-462.

Lightbown, P.M. (2012). Intensive L2 instruction in Canada: Why not immersion? In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning*, (pp.25-44). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (1989). Intensive ESL programmes in Québec primary schools. *TESL Canada Journal*, 7(1), 11-32.

Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (1991). Étude des effets à long terme de l'apprentissage intensif de l'anglais, langue seconde, au primaire. *La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes,* 48(1), 90-117.

Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (1994). An innovative program for primary ESL students in Québec. *TESOL quarterly,* 28(3), 563-579.

Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How Languages are Learned*. Third Edition, Oxford Handbook for Language Teachers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lyster, R., Collins, L., & Ballinger, S. (2009). Linking languages through a bilingual read-aloud project. *Language Awareness,* 18(3/4), 366-383.

MacFarlane, A. (2005). Examen du programme de français intensif : une stratégie pédagogique pour améliorer les résultats du français langue seconde au Canada, Ottawa, CASLT/ACPLS.

Maley, A. (1987). Poetry and songs as effective language–learning activities. In W.M. Rivers(Ed) *Interactive Language Teaching*. New York, Cambridge University Press.

Meara, P. (1993). Tintin and the world service, A look at lexical environments. LATEFL: Annual conference report, 32-37.

Meyer L., Stahl, S., Wardrop, J., & Linn, R. (1992). The effects of reading storybooks aloud to children, *Annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, December 3-7.*

Milton J. (2008). Vocabulary uptake from informal learning tasks, *The Language Learning Journal,* 36(2), 227-237. DOI: 10.1080/09571730802390742

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport [MELS] (2006). English as a second language. Cycle One Program, *Quebec Education Program: Preschool and Elementary Education.* Québec, Québec.

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport [MELS]. (2007a). Programme d'anglais, langue seconde du premier cycle du primaire. Rapport d'expérimentation. Année 2005-2006.

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport [MELS] (2007b). Document complémentaire du rapport d'expérimentation. Année 2005-2006.

Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec [MEQ] (2001). Lire, écrire, communiquer…réussir : Plan d'action pour améliorer l'apprentissage de la langue seconde. (No. 2001-01-01101) Québec, Québec.

Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec [MEQ] (2001). English as a second language Cycle Two and Three Program, *Quebec Education Program: Preschool and Elementary Education.* Québec, Québec, 351-362.

Miralpeix, I. (2006). Age and vocabulary acquisition in English as a foreign language (EFL) In

    C. Muñoz (ed.) *Age and the Rate of Foreign Language Learning.* (pp.89-106). Bristol:

    Multilingual Matters.

Mora, J.C. (2006). Age effect on oral fluency development. In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Age and the Rate*

    of Foreign Language Learning. (pp.65-88). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Muñoz, C. (2006). The effects of age. In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Age and the Rate of Foreign Language*

    Learning. (pp.1-40). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Muñoz, C. (2008). Symetries and asymmetries of age effects in naturalistic and instructed

    learning. *Applied Linguistics* 29(4) 578-596.

Muñoz, C. (2011). Is input more significant than starting age in foreign language acquisition?

    International Review of Applied Linguistics, 49, 113-133.

Muñoz, C. (2012). Intensive exposure as a turning point. In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Intensive Exposure*

    Experiences in Second Language Learning, (pp.25-44). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Muñoz, C., & Singleton, D. (2011). A critical review of age-related research on L2 ultimate

    attainment. *Language Teaching*, 44 (1) 1-35.

Nagy W.E., & Herman, P. (1987). Breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge: Implications for

    acquisition and instruction. In M. McKeown & M. Curtiss (Eds), *The Nature of Vocabulary*

    Acquisition (pp.19-35). Hillsdale: Erlbaum Publishers.

Nation, I.S.P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. Cambridge: Cambridge
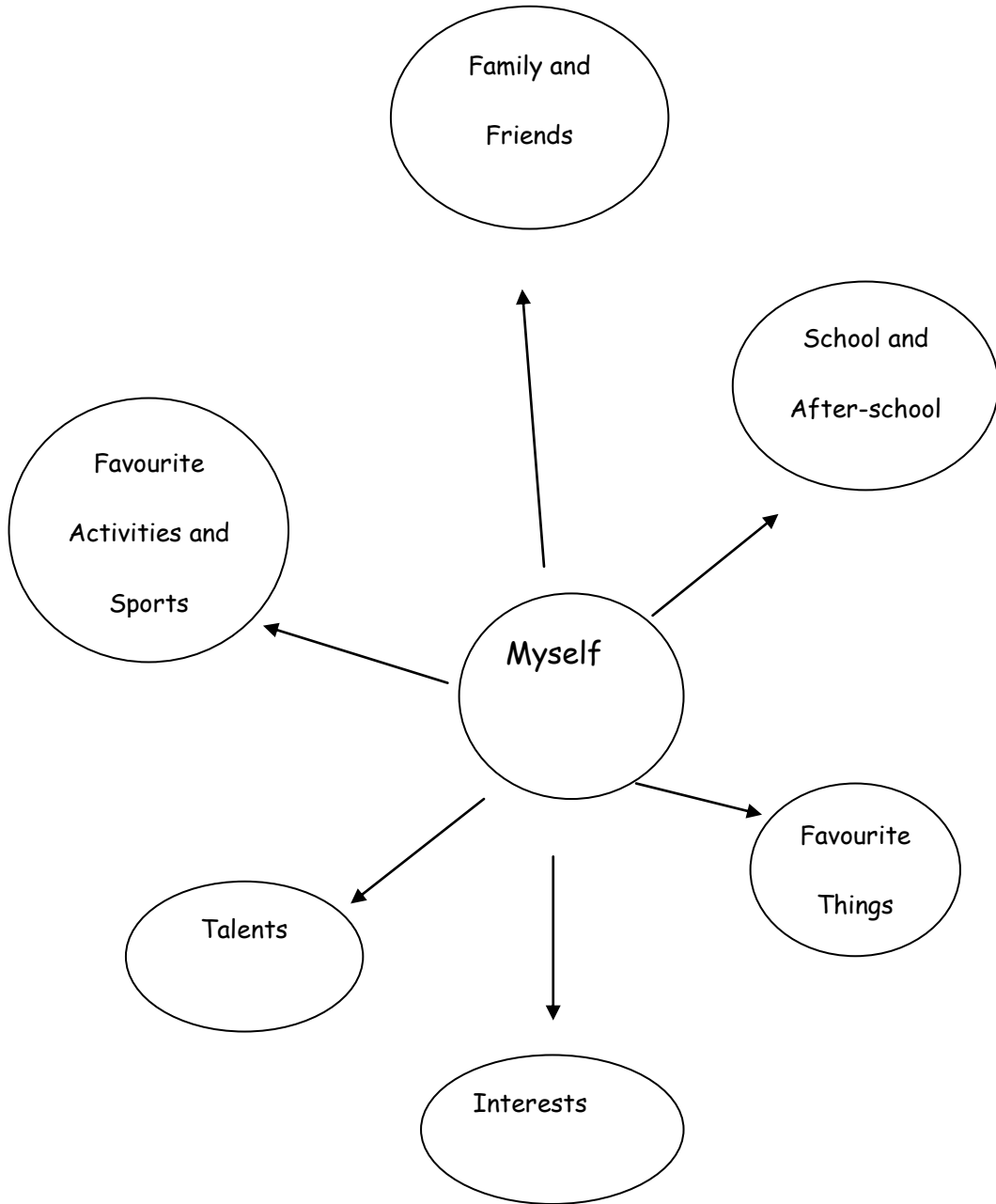
    University Press.

Nation, I.S.P. (2006). How large a vocabulary is needed for reading and listening? *The Canadian Modern Language Review,* 63(1), 59-82.

Nation, I.S.P. (2013). Learning vocabulary in another language. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Netten, J., & Germain, C. (2012). A new paradigm for the learning of a second or foreign language: the neurolinguistic approach. *Neuroeducation*, 1(1), 85-114.

Nikolov, M. (1999). Why do you learn English? Because the teacher is short. A study of Hungarian children's foreign language learning motivation. *Language Teaching Research*, 3(1) 33-56.

Nikolov, M., & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, J. (2006). Recent research on age, second language acquisition, and early foreign learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 26, 234-260.

Pfenninger, S.E. (2014). The misunderstood variable: Age effects as a function of type of instruction. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 4(3), 529-556.

Roessingh, H., & Elgie, S. (2009). Early language and literacy development among young English language learners: Preliminary insights from a longitudinal study. *TESL Canada Journal* 26(2), 24-45.

Romney, J.C., Romney D.M., & Braun, C. (1988). The effect of reading aloud in French to immersion children on second language acquisition. *The Canadian Modern Language Review,* 45(3), 530-538.

Rossiter, M., Derwing, T.M., Manimtim, L.G., & Thompson, R.I. (2010). Oral fluency: The neglected component in the communicative language classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review,* 66(4), 583-606.

Saindon, J., Landry R., et Boutouchent, F. (2011). Anglophones majoritaires et français langue seconde au Canada : effets complémentaires de la scolarisation et de l'environnement social. *La Revue Canadienne de Linguistique Appliquée*, 14(1), 64-85.

Serrano, R. (2012). Is intensive learning effective? Reflecting on the results from cognitive psychology and the second language acquisition literature. In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning*, (pp.3-22). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Spada, N. (2015). SLA research and L2 pedagogy: Misapplications and questions of relevance. *Language Teaching*, 48(1) 69-81.

SPEAQ (2012). Guide d'implantation de l'enseignement intensif de l'anglais, langue seconde au Québec, SPEAQ (Société pour la promotion de l'enseignement de l'anglais langue seconde au Québec) Montréal.

Stern, H. H. (1985). The time factor and compact course development. *TESL Canada Journal, 3,* 13-28.

Thompson, L. (2000). Mouse's First Halloween. Simon & Schuster.

Tonzar, C., Lotto, L., & Job, R. (2009). L2 Vocabulary acquisition in children: effects of learning method and cognate status. *Language Learning,* 59(3), 623-646.

Tragant Mestres E., & Lundberg, G. (2011). The teachers role: What is it significance in early language learning, In Enever, J. (Ed) *ELLiE Early Language Learning in Europe* (pp. 81-100).United Kingdom, British Council.

Webb, S., & Macalister, J. (2013). Is text written for children useful for L1 extensive reading? TESOL Quarterly, 47(2), 300-322.

White, J., & Turner, C. (2003). The development of oral proficiency in grade 6 ESL intensive programs. Report/Study commissioned by MEQ.

White, J., & Turner, C. (2005). Comparing children's oral ability in two ESL programs. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(4), 491-517.

White, J., & Turner, C. (2012). What language is promoted in intensive programs? Analyzing language generated from oral assessment tasks. In C. Muñoz (ed.) *Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning*, (pp.88-110). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Wiggins, D. G. (2007). Pre-K music and the emergent reader: Promoting literacy in a music-enhanced environment, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35 (1), 55-64.

Zahar R., Cobb T., & Spada N. (2001). Acquiring vocabulary through reading: Effects of frequency and contextual richness, *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *57(4)*, 541-572.

APPENDIX A
AUDIO-PAL IDEA MAP

Family and

Friends

School and

After-school

Favourite

Activities and

Sports

Myself

Favourite

Things

Talents

Interests

APPENDIX B
RATING SCALE (AUDIO-PAL)

White and Turner (2005)

6

Yes

Fluent speech and

some authentic use of

idioms?

Errors in most sentences

or very limited

information?

No

5

Yes

Variety of structure (2

sentences patterns and

more) with expansions?

No

4

Yes

No

Sentences mostly

English and at least 3

items of information?

Yes

Sentences follow one

another without long

hesitations?

Yes

3

No

No

2

No

No

1

101
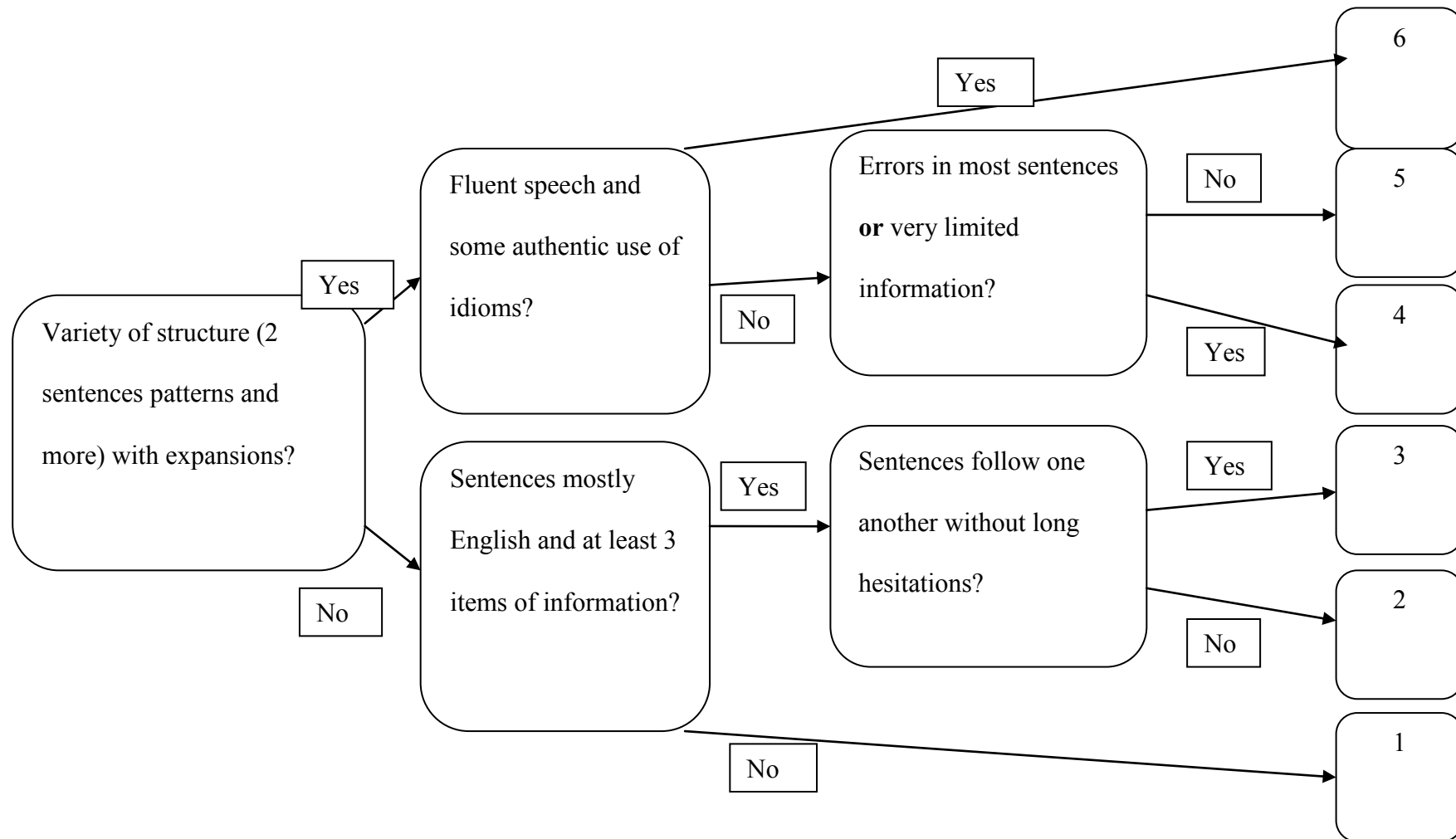
RATING SCALE (STORY RETELL THE DINGLES)

	6

Yes → 6

Fluent use of language structures?	5

| Key story line elements are detailed? | |

Yes → 5

Yes

Coherent story with all* key elements and no long pauses?

No (Fluent) → Key story line elements are detailed?

No → 4

| Frequent use of French or only a list of English words? | |

| Omission of two or more key story line elements? | 3 |

No (Frequent) → Omission of two or more key story line elements?

No → 3

Yes → 2

	2

Yes → 1

	1
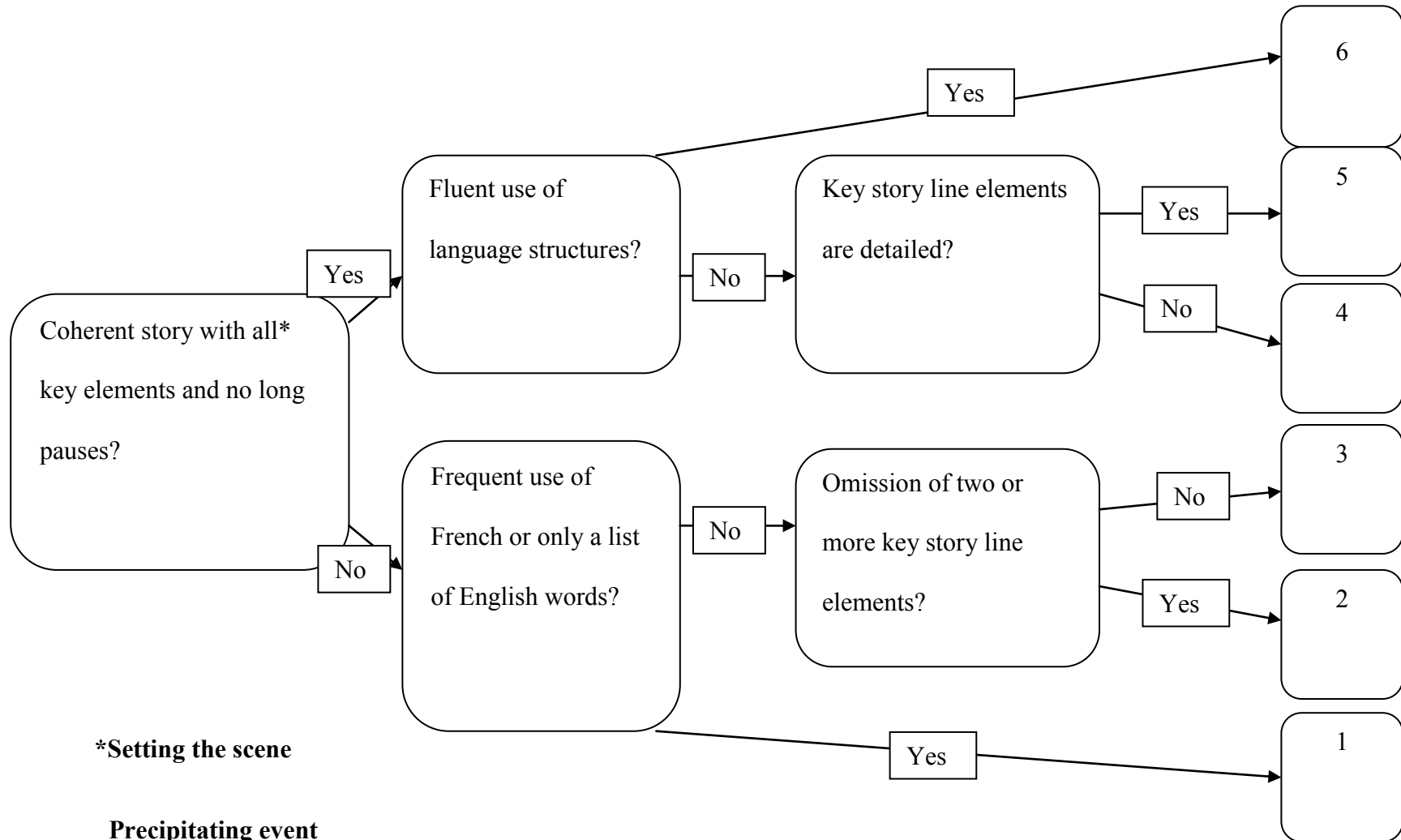
*Setting the scene

Precipitating event

Climax

APPENDIX D
STUDENT BIO

Student bio

Initials: _____School:_____Group:_____

Outside the classroom, I regularly speak English with these people:

Parents ☐

Brothers and sisters ☐

Grandparents ☐

Aunts and uncles ☐

Daycare ☐

Friends ☐

Other: _____ ☐

I watch English TV, movies, others _____hours a week.

I read English books, magazines, newspaper, _____hours a week.

I lived in _____for _____years where I spoke English a lot.

I consider myself   **very good**   ☐   in English.

                     good   ☐

                     not very good   ☐

APPENDIX E
SELECTION OF SONGS USED IN CLASS IN GRADES ONE AND TWO

Aikendrum
Alphabet Song (The)
Apples and Bananas
Are you Sleeping?
Bingo
Colour Song (The)
Chicken Song
Days of the Week
Down by the Bay
Head and Shoulders
Hickory, Dickory Dock
Hokey Pokey
If You're Happy
I Love You
I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus
Itsy Bitsy Spider
Lazy Mary
Little Green Frog
Looby Loo
Old MacDonald
One Finger, One Thumb
Peanut Butter and Jelly
Reach for the Sky
Row your Boat
Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
Sally the Camel
Santa Claus is Coming to Town
Skinamarink
Six Little Ducks
Teddy Bear
Ten in a Bed/Roll Over
Ten Little Fingers
There Are Seven Days
There Was an Old Lady
Three Little Monkeys
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
Walk, Hop, Run
We Wish you a Merry Christmas
Wheels on the Bus (The)

APPENDIX F
SELECTION OF BOOKS USED IN GRADES ONE AND TWO

Cabrera, Jane	If You're Happy and You Know It	0-439-82859-7
Carle, E./ Martin B	Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?	0-805-04790-5
Carle, Eric	From Head to Toe	0-060-23515-2
Carle, Eric	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	0-590-03029-9
Chapman Calitri,S.	There Were 10 in the Bed	0-439-75559-X
Clarke, Jacqueline	Moose's Loose Tooth	0-439-41183-1
Colandro, Lucille	There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Shell	0-439-81536-3
Colandro, Lucille	There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Bat	0-439-71107-X
Cronin, Doreen	Click Clack Moo, Cows That Type	0-743-61517
Dr Seuss	Green Eggs and Ham	0-394-80016-8
Dr Seuss	How the Grinch Stole Christmas	
Jeffers, Oliver	How to Catch a Star	0-00-715034-2
Kellogg, Steven	The Missing Mitten Mystery	0-439-37594-0
Kroll, Steven	The Biggest Valentine Ever	0-439-76419-X
Martin/Archambault	Chicka Chicka Boom	0-689-83568-X
Mayer, Mercer	Just a Snowman	0-06-053947-X
Metzger, Steve	Five Little Penguins Slipping on the Ice	0-439-46577-X
Munsch, Robert	Alligator Baby	0-590-12387-4
Munsch, Robert	Andrew's Loose Tooth	0-590-12435-8
Munsch, Robert	50 Below Zero	
Munsch, Robert	I Have To Go	0-920303-74-9
Munsch, Robert	Love you Forever	0-920668-37-2
Munsch, Robert	Mortimer	0-920303-11-0
Munsch, Robert	Mud Puddle	1-55037-468-0
Munsch, Robert	Murmel, Murmel, Murmel	0-92026-31-6
Munsch, Robert	Paper Bag Princess	0-920236-16-2
Munsch, Robert	Stephanie's Ponytail	1-55037-484-2
Munsch, Robert	Thomas' Snowsuit	0-920303-33-1
Munsch, Robert	Up, Up, Down!	0-439-31796-7
Munsch, Robert	We Share Everything	0-590-51450-4
Nelson S/Rollins J.	Frosty the Snowman	0-439-72990-4
Ottolenghi, Carol	The Little Red Hen	1-57768-378-1
Schertle, Alice	All You Need for a Snowman	0-439-58562-7
Scieszka, Jon	The True Story of the Three Little Pigs	0-590-45495-1
Stinson, Kathy	Red is Best	0-920236-26-X
Thompson, Lauren	Mouse's First Halloween	0-689-83176-5
Traditional	The Gingerbread Man	0-590-41056-3
	Goldilocks and the Three Bears	0-58247017-X
	There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly	