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Editorial

A New Season of Quebec Language Policy

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INTRODUCTION

As *J-BILD* readers know, we are a journal interested in scholarship that advances and informs understandings of the complex interplay among the themes of belonging, identity, language, and diversity. We examine these interplays through the lenses of critical sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, meaning we are interested, for instance, in how individuals navigate, take on, and resist language identities and how power is wielded and challenged in different language policy contexts.

The recent sociopolitical developments in Quebec provide an excellent example of these issues of language, power, and belonging at play. We are referring to Bill 96, An Act Respecting French, the Official and Common Language of Quebec, presented by the Minister of Justice and French Language, Simon Jolin-Barrette (you can see the original Bill in English or French on the Quebec National Assembly website, here, though there have been a number of amendments, which are not yet posted online). The Bill states a primary goal of strengthening the current Charter of the French Language, or Bill 101, which has been in place since 1977. With a strong CAQ (Coalition Avenir Quebec) majority government behind Bill 96, it was voted into law on May 24, 2022, though not without strong criticisms from minority groups in Quebec.

A recently formed language rights taskforce provides an accessible and concise summary of key concerns with Bill 96, from the perspectives of linguistic and human rights (here), including: the right for the Office québécois de la langue francaise (OQLF) to enter, without warrant, any place other than a house, to ensure compliance with the law; the use of the notwithstanding clause to bypass elements of the Quebec Charter of Rights and the Canadian Charter, meaning that citizens will not have the recourse to fight the law; limits to enrolment in English cegeps (junior colleges in the Quebec higher education system), with additional French courses for all students in English cegeps, and the requirement for all non-Anglophone cegep students, including Indigenous students, to pass a standardised French exam before they can complete their degree.

In this editorial, we'd like to share some of the questions and concerns that Bill 96 raises for issues of belonging, identity, language, and diversity through the critical sociolinguistic lens of our journal. Before that, for the benefit of readers outside of Quebec, here is a necessarily oversimplified summary of both Bill 101 and Bill 96.

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THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE, BILL 101

Bill 101, or the Charter of the French Language, was adopted in 1977 and makes French the official language of Quebec. The objective of Bill 101 was to ensure French would be the common language of use in *public* domains. A key article that distinguished Bill 101 from previous language laws in Quebec was the end of freedom of choice in language of education for immigrants, or allophones. This put an end to immigrant anglicization (immigrant parents sending their children to English elementary and high schools), which was seen as a significant threat to the survival and vitality of the French language. Children defined in the law as historic anglophones (i.e., who have one parent who completed their education in English in Canada), however, have access to a Certificate of Eligibility, which gives them the right to be educated in the English system in Quebec. In Bill 96, historic anglophones carry certain rights to access education and public services in English that immigrants (including non-historic anglophones) and allophones do not share.

It is relevant that use of language in the private domain is not mentioned in Bill 101. Like its successor, Bill 96, is intended to confirm French as the common language of the *public* domain. In this sense, Bill 101 has been largely successful; French is well-established as the language of public and social life in Quebec (Bourhis, 2008). Yet, Census data that reports on home language are often cited as evidence of the threatened vitality of the French language in Quebec. According to the 2016 Census, 77.1% of the population indicated French as their mother tongue, a decrease of 1% since the 2011 Census, 7.5% indicated English as their mother tongue, a decrease of 0.2% since 2011, and 13.2% indicated Other as their mother tongue, an increase of 0.9% (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Indeed, the number of people in Quebec who use French as their primary language at home has declined. However, this alone does not tell the story of language demographics in Quebec, especially in Montreal. While Bill 101 has firmly established the use of French in the public domain, it has also increased the rate of bilingualism and multilingualism in Quebec, particularly in Montreal where most immigrants settle and most anglophones live. The rate of English-French bilingualism is continuing to grow, from 40.6% in 2006, to 42.6% in 2011, and 44.5% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). This speaks to the strength of individuals to navigate complex sociopolitical landscapes and make decisions to support linguistic capital for their families, while celebrating multilingualism. Bill 96 will likely lead to other social changes that are inconsistent with the goals of the policy.

AN ACT RESPECTING FRENCH, THE OFFICIAL AND COMMON LANGUAGE OF QUEBEC, BILL 96

Bill 96, like Bill 101, challenges the core themes of *J-BILD*, and you will likely find that the premise of the language bill is reductionist, based as it is on language identity categories (francophone, anglophone, allophone) that don't fit many Quebecers, particularly in Montreal.

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Bill 96 also makes no exemptions or provisions for Indigenous communities, which will have consequences on their access to higher education. The identity categories that shape Quebec society in terms of rights, and which already carry significant weight under Bill 101, will carry more under Bill 96; they will determine who has what choices when it comes to higher education, whereas under Bill 101, this was restricted to elementary and high school. Effectively, Bill 96 greatly restricts the freedom of choice of language of education in higher education for allophones and francophones. A cap will be set on enrolment to English cegeps, not by the Minister of Education, but by the Minister of Justice and French Language, and three French courses will be added to students' programs of study, in addition to the two that students in English cegeps already take, to prepare students (except historic anglophones) for a common French exit exam, the same one students in French cegeps must pass in order to complete their degrees.

There will be other sectors where language identity category will determine rights. While historic Anglophones will continue to have the right to health care and legal services in English (though judges are no longer required to be bilingual under Bill 96, meaning over time, we can imagine that fewer bilingual judges will be accessible, raising questions about how that right will be ensured), newcomers to Quebec will have the right to access health and public services in English for the first six months they are in Quebec, after which time they must be served first in French. How this will be monitored remains to be seen, but it is plausible to imagine an identification system.

In terms of monitoring the application of Bill 96, like Bill 101, this new language policy is complaints-based meaning that anyone who can submit a complaint related to a violation of the language policy to the OQLF (Office québécois de la langue française). Bill 96 goes further, however, as it gives the OQLF the judicial power to prosecute those who do not comply with the policy. As an example, a doctor could choose to provide services in English could be reported, and if a complaint is lodged with the OQLF, the OQLF would have the power to investigate the language of interaction between medical professionals, possibly putting patient confidentiality at risk.

IMPACTS OF BILL 96 TO QUEBEC SOCIETY IN TERMS OF BILD THEMES

One of the key tenets of sociolinguistics that informs the scholarship we publish in *J-BILD* is that language shapes and is shaped by social interactions at all levels of society. The politics around language and language policy play a significant role allowing or disallowing belonging, or a recognition of and respect for diversity. When the rights and needs of one group, defined by language, supersede others, spaces for an equal sense of belonging in civic society are closed off, and it becomes more difficult to build mutual understanding needed for a multicultural society. The punitive approach of Bill 96 will likely push anglophone and allophone Quebecers and Indigenous peoples away from French. Rather than encouraging belonging, this law will exacerbate divisions in Quebec society. As we have seen in the Bill 101 era, these divisions may

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not follow exactly the vision of the policy writers. One of the unintended consequences of Bill 101 has been an increase in bilingualism and multilingualism in Montreal. If we project forward 5 or 10 years, it is possible that there will be a larger divide between an increasingly small, but elite class of strong bilinguals in Montreal who have been able to get into the restricted spots in English cegeps, and study in English, but with an enriched French component to their studies, and those who study in French cegeps, who will maintain their current two ESL classes, and miss out on the opportunity to develop as strong bilingualism. Allophones will more than likely continue to develop strong multilingualism, as the social capital that multilingualism affords them is not going to change under Bill 96.

We are hopeful that as we have seen with Bill 101, Quebecers will continue to find ways to express creativity with language (e.g., Lamarre's 2014 study of bilingual winks; Sarkar's 2009 study of language mixing in Montreal hip hop), resisting the reduction of their identities by the terms defined through this language policy. As sociolinguists, we have seen enough evidence that individuals will create spaces where they can be playful with language, embrace the richness of learning new languages, while celebrating and living, at home, in a multitude of languages and cultures.

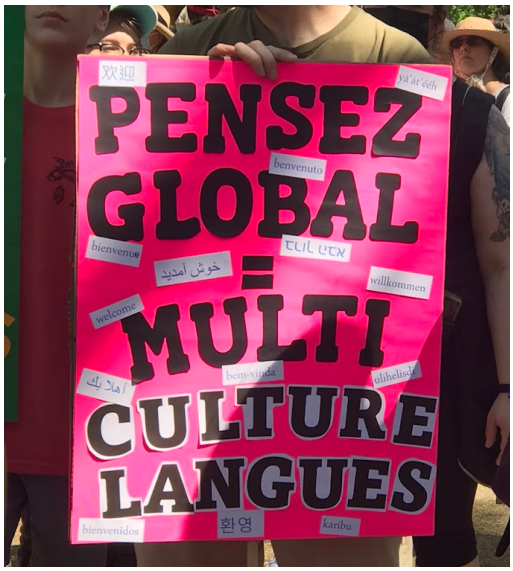

Figure 1: Signs at a Bill 96 Protest March, May 15, 2022, downtown Montreal (photo credit: Alison Crump)

ARTICLE SUMMARIES

Within the context of the current events explored in the paragraphs above, we are pleased to share with our readers four articles related to themes of belonging, identity, language, and

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diversity. We are proud to share the work of researchers from two different stages of the research cycle, including two critical literature reviews and two research studies. With the current events of Bill 96 passing in *J-BILD*'s home province, the issues of belonging, identity, language, and diversity as they relate to formal language policy were front of mind as we reviewed, peer-mentored, edited, and published these four articles. Each of them, in their own way, underscores the role that language diversity plays in individuals' sense of belonging and their identity, factors which play a significant role in individual and collective wellbeing. Each article adds value to conversations about Bill 96, which must be ongoing as citizens of Quebec navigate this new season of language policy. We sincerely hope you enjoy the articles in this issue; we are immensely grateful to the authors for their act of service to the collective knowledge in sharing their learning with us, acknowledging the significant effort and work that goes into researching, writing, and publishing in academia.

Research Studies

"Identity construction of places through translanguaging in Jakarta: A linguistic landscape of Gambir train station" is co-authored by Anna Marietta Da Silva and Deny Arnos Kwary. In this article, Da Silva and Kwary report on research conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia, related to the relationship between individuals and the public spaces they navigate as part of their day-to-day lives. Specifically, the authors explore what the language of written signage suggests about the identity of the location. Da Silva and Kwary provide a comprehensive review of the linguistic landscape literature and the socio/political/geographical context of Jakarta. Data included photographs of written signs taken in August 2017, which were categorised by language and qualitatively interpreted. The analysis indicates a high level of bilingualism and language mixing in the linguistic landscape of the Gambir train station. In addition, results show that most of the signage is related to infrastructure development and travel. Da Silva and Kwary argue that the linguistic landscape of this locale presents an identity of a social space for local and international travellers and non-travellers; rather than separate or siloed from the rest of the city, this train station's linguistic landscape reflects what is seen in malls and urban centres. As evident from Da Silva and Kwary's article, the languages visible in public spaces shape the identity of that space, which interplay with the identity of individuals navigating those spaces. As *J-BILD* managing editors, we appreciate the connections made in this article between linguistic landscape and how it can shape the belonging and identity of the individuals who navigate public spaces. There are clear links to our previous discussion on Quebec language policy in terms of how language policy affects the linguistic landscape and can affect the sense of belonging, identity, and diversity of language practices among individuals.

Darlene Rodriguez, Lina Tuschling, and Paul McDaniel are the co-authors of "'Why do they have to laugh at me?': Stereotypes and Prejudices Experienced by Immigrant Youth," a research study that seeks to address the question of how immigrant youth encounter and adapt to new environments, specifically those that they did not choose themselves. The researchers used data from twenty-five essays, written by young people from immigrant backgrounds who settled in

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Atlanta, Georgia. The authors tested the contact hypothesis, as posited by Gordon Allport ([1954], 1979), which argues that inter-group contact reduces biases, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. The results of research confirm the contact hypothesis, especially when favourable social conditions are exigent, for example when a young person from an immigrant or refugee background joins a sports team with individuals from other backgrounds. The work of these authors adds another valued voice to the chorus of researchers and educators who have, through this journal, continuously underscored the complex interplay between belonging, identity, language, and diversity. Readers will appreciate the perspective this article brings to supporting meaningful integration of immigrants into new societies, including the richness of diversity that they bring to our schools, workplaces, and communities.

Critical Literature Reviews

Satinder Kaur and Jessica Szorenyi are the authors of "The Role of Educators in Supporting the Development of Refugee Students' Sense of Belonging." In this critical literature review, the authors explore the role of North American schools in the development of refugee students' sense of belonging. Twenty-five peer-reviewed articles were included in the authors' critical review of the literature. Through their thematic analysis, the authors identified four key themes in the literature related to the role of the school in supporting refugee belonging. The authors underscore the importance for developing and implementing professional development for teachers based on refugee-focused, trauma-informed pedagogy. The authors provide directions for future research, policy development, and curricular support for refugee students. This article will be an important read for those interested in learning more about how to effectively support refugee students in succeeding in the context of K-12 schooling in North America and beyond. Reflecting on this article in the context of this editorial, Bill 96 appears to miss the mark in terms of its duty of care for refugee students in Quebec schools; rather than supporting the socio-emotional well-being of refugee students and facilitating a sense of belonging and welcome in schools and the community, restrictive language policies like Bill 96 have the potential to make refugee students feel excluded. We look forward to further work from these authors and further research that explores the intersections between refugee student experiences and belonging, identity, language, and diversity.

"English Learning and Family Language Policy in China: A Critical Literature Review" is authored by Yue Ma. In this article, Ma explores Family Language Policy (FLP) as a framework for exploring how families in China overtly or covertly plan language use in the home. Ma provides a detailed and thorough overview of English language learning in China and situates FLP as relevant to the context. To this point, Ma locates the study within a field of research that is heavily dominated by studies about English language learning in and related to schools in China and identifies a gap in the research with respect to how families navigate overt and covert language planning within the home. Ma concludes with questions and directions for future research. This article will be of interest to anyone interested in or involved in understanding more about the relationships

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between formal language policy, family language practices, and bilingualism. We look forward to following the development of the field of FLP in China, as outlined by Ma in this article.

As always, we would like to express our gratitude to the peer mentors and copy editors who volunteer their service and expertise in support of sharing critical voices in sociolinguistic scholarship.

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