Research Study

When Linguistic Identity and Language Choice Diverge: Francophone Youth in a Minority Setting Embrace their Francophonie and Still Prefer to Speak English

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ABSTRACT. Sociolinguists have long noted that for a language to survive, young people must speak it. In English-majority settings in Canada, young people in francophone schools often choose to speak a lot of English. The purpose of the present study was to better understand why francophone students speak English so often, focusing particularly on the role of francophone schools, linguistic identity (LI), and future selves. Junior high and high school students in francophone schools participated in focus groups to provide us with information about students' perception of their languages and the existence and range of linguistic identities. We expected to find that LIs are a strong indicator of feelings toward a language and therefore use. The results of this study showed that the youth embraced their francophone identity and yet still admitted to speaking a lot of English. The youth recognized the contradiction, attributing their francophone identity to feelings of belongingness to the francophone community (particularly schools), rather than the use of language. The results of this study could inform best practices at schools to support the vitality of languages in minority settings.

RÉSUMÉ. Selon les sociolinguistes, les jeunes doivent parler une langue pour qu'elle survive. Dans les milieux à majorité anglophone du Canada, les jeunes qui assistent aux écoles francophones choisissent souvent de parler beaucoup d'anglais. L'objectif de ce projet de recherche était de mieux comprendre pourquoi les élèves francophones parlent tant d'anglais, en nous concentrant particulièrement sur trois variables : le rôle des écoles francophones, l'identité linguistique (IL) et le futur soi. Des élèves inscrits dans des écoles secondaires francophones ont participé à des groupes de discussion afin de nous renseigner sur leur perception de leurs choix de langues ainsi que sur l'existence et la diversité de leurs identités linguistiques. Nous nous attendions à trouver que les ils soient un indicateur fort des sentiments envers une langue et donc envers son utilisation. Pourtant, les résultats de cette étude ont montré que les jeunes s'approprient leur identité francophone, tout en admettant qu'ils parlent beaucoup d'anglais. Les jeunes ont reconnu la contradiction, attribuant leur identité francophone aux sentiments d'appartenance à la communauté francophone (l'école francophone, en particulier) plutôt qu'à l'usage de français.

Ces résultats contribuent à la construction des pratiques des écoles pour soutenir la vitalité des langues en milieu minoritaire.

Keywords: teacher identity, art-based research methods, native/non-native speakerism, TESOL.

INTRODUCTION

A language's existence becomes threatened once speakers cease to use it, decrease the number of communicative situations in which they employ it, and fail to pass it on to the next generation (Fishman, 1964; UNESCO, 2003). Some minority languages are particularly in danger of disappearance (Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992). Minority languages are languages that do not have an official status and are not associated with social prestige or power; they are often spoken by a numerical minority of the population as well (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). In some cases, a language that is widely used in many contexts can be a minority language in a particular context, such as French in the majority-language-English provinces of Canada (Ruiz, 2015). One important sign that a minority language will survive is that children speak it (Fishman, 1964). However, simply being exposed to a language does not guarantee that someone will speak it (Li & Denis, 1983; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). If children do not use the language, they can end up with a better ability to understand that language than to speak it (Beaudrie, 2009). Children who speak a minority language often have a strong sense of belongingness both within the minority culture and the majority culture, as well as strong family relationships (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002).

Previous studies (Deveau et al., 2005; Lavoie & Houle, 2015) have shown that French-speaking youth living in an English-majority-language community prefer to communicate in English. The aim of the present study was to explore why this is the case, and to examine issues linked to the minority language speakers' identities. Many factors have been found to support bilinguals' choice to communicate in a minority language (and therefore contribute to the long-term survival of the language), such as the number of people who speak the language (Lavoie & Houle, 2015) and positive attitudes toward the language (Karan, 2011). Attitudes are internal dispositional states toward an entity or action (East, 2009). Positive attitudes toward a language are thought to be an important predictor of whether people learn it (East, 2009). We focus on three important variables related to bilinguals' choice to communicate in a minority language that are particularly relevant in this context: minority-language schools (Price & Tamburelli, 2016), linguistic identity (Priestly, McKinnie, & Hunter, 2009), and ideal future selves (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). We expand on the evidence for these factors supporting long-term survival of minority languages.

MINORITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

The youth who participated in this study all attended francophone schools in the English-majority-language community in Alberta, Canada. Francophone schools are designed for students who know French as a heritage language, often because their parents were educated in French (Aunger, 2010; Julien, 1993). A heritage language is a language that is associated with a person's culture or ethnic background (Montrul, 2010), such as a language spoken by one's grandparents. In francophone schools in Alberta, French is spoken as the default language by all the school personnel. The one systematic exception to this general rule is that an English language arts class is required for children from grade three (approximately eight years of age) on. Francophone schools differ from the highly popular French immersion programs, which are designed to immerse non-French-speaking students into French (Government of Alberta, n.d.; Ruiz, 2015). The important role of institutional support, particularly schools,

in minority-language maintenance has long been recognized (Fishman, 1980; Price & Tamburelli, 2016). Youth need to be exposed to the language and have opportunities to use it frequently in authentic interactions in order to acquire and use it (Gathercole & Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, schools foster the acquisition of academic language, that is, the language needed in order to understand and communicate concepts and ideas essential for the students' academic success, like definitions and explanations (Cummins, 2000). The mastery of academic language is an important predictor of school achievement (Zacarian, 2012). Students who receive a francophone education in the province of Alberta are expected to be highly proficient in French as well as participate in and identify with the francophone community (Alberta Education, 2022).

Simply offering instruction in a minority language is not enough to guarantee the long-term survival of that language (Fishman, 1980). In some minority-language schools, formal interactions are carried out in the minority language but informal interactions outside the classroom drift to the majority language (Thomas & Roberts, 2011). This has been the pattern reported for francophone schools in Alberta (Aunger, 2010). In addition to the school language, if the minority language is spoken at home, then children are more likely to speak it (Landry et al., 2008; Oishi, 2006; Pilote & Canuel, 2013). In accordance with section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, francophone schools in Alberta welcome individuals who have the constitutional right to be instructed in French (Government of Canada, 2019). As a result, most students attending francophone schools (but not all) have parents who could speak French to them at home, thereby supporting their school learning. In this study, we looked at youth who have the right for French-first language education as described in section 23. We expected at least two other factors to be important influences on the language choices of the youth: linguistic identity and ideal future selves.

LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

The francophone schools in Alberta encourage youth to speak French because of their francophone identity (Dalley, Desjardins, Isabelle, & Fournier, 2006), as we will show in more detail below. There is a strong link between spoken languages and the degree to which a person identifies with a particular group (Charron, 2017; Gaudet & Clément, 2009; Pilote & Canuel, 2013). For example, one study found strong correlations between LI and the use of the minority language Slovene in a German-majority-language community (Priestly et al., 2009). Deveau and colleagues (2005) posit that in a minority context, this link is further emphasized as linguistic groups feel compelled to distinguish themselves from the dominating majority. That is, individuals' identity is reinforced as they feel an opposing identity's existence. These notions are captured in Deveau and colleagues' (2005) version of *linguistic identity* (LI) theory, which details that self-definition ("what I am") and identity engagement (i.e., what one is willing to do to adhere to a specific identity) interact to create a strong and positive identity grounded upon language. The former mainly concerns an individual's sense of belonging to a group, and the latter is described as the affective meaning that identity provides, which is developed in conditions where autonomy and self-awareness are promoted (Deveau et al., 2005). LI is constructed on an individual level, negotiated through communication practices (Charron, 2017). It can be presented through "language choice, code-switching, and formal/discursive/rhetorical variation" found in speech (Olsen & Olsen, 2010, p. 35).

In this study, knowing that francophone schools encourage the development of a francophone identity (Dalley et al., 2006), we wondered whether the youth actually adopt this LI. If not, then, this would be at least a partial explanation for their preference to speak English.

IDEAL FUTURE SELF

One factor that could contribute to whether French-speaking youth choose to speak French is whether they imagine themselves using French in the future. Our focus on this factor was inspired by Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) theory. Inspired by the possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985) psychological theories, L2MSS hypothesizes that:

> If proficiency in the target language is part of one's ideal self, then this will be a great motivator to speak the language due to our constant psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p.4).

More specifically, this system is made up of three different components: 1) *the ideal self*: the most powerful motivator as it encompasses our intense wishes to achieve our internalized goals; 2) *the ought-to-be self*: what an individual believes they must possess in order to avoid unwanted outcomes; and 3) *the L2 learning experience*: the learning environment which an individual is exposed to (this can range from individual connection to experiences; e.g. peer groups, the impact a teacher has on a student's learning, feelings of success; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Creating or entertaining a possible self would therefore serve as a personalized self-guide for one's future, which can be applicable to one's linguistic goals (Munezane, 2015). Further, what marks the concept of a possible self as robust to external influences is its components; senses, and visualization work together to ensemble an image that extends further than daydreaming and becomes a reality that culminates in long-term motivation to speak an L2, if that *ideal self* is activated frequently (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Though the L2MSS theory is based on L2 acquisition theory, we extend the construct of ideal self to French-speaking youth in a minority context. Previous researchers have based theories of minority or heritage languages on theories from L2 acquisition (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Valdés, 2005). It is possible that youth in francophone schools do not imagine that French is a language that they will use in the future and therefore opt to speak a lot of English.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study focused on youth attending francophone schools in the Canadian province of Alberta, an English-majority-language part of Canada. For official governmental purposes, "francophone" is defined as a person who has French as a mother tongue (Chavez et al., 2016; Gaudet & Clément, 2009; Government of Alberta, 2018b, p. 5). French is one of Canada's two official languages, spoken by nearly 30% of the population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). The percentage of francophones varies considerably by region. The province of Alberta is home to more than 86,000 people (out of the total population of 4,436,258) whose first language is French, making it the third-largest francophone minority population in Canada, after Ontario and New Brunswick (Government of Alberta, 2018b).

Today, Alberta's francophone community is active politically and, since 1994, regulates its own educational governance to ensure the survival of French (Aunger, 2010). With over 8,000 students enrolled in francophone schools as of 2016 (Alberta Education, 2016), the francophone school system has played a critical part in perpetuating francophone culture and language across generations (Lavoie & Houle, 2015; Pilote & Canuel, 2013). Strategies to augment French-speaking rates at these schools are among the prime concerns of the francophone community. Alberta's largest francophone school board, Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No.

2 (CSCN), states that 100 percent of their students are bilingual, all of them being described as having a "solid mastery of the French language" (1) (CSCN, Programmes d'étude, n.d.). Nevertheless, French speakers in a minority context often prefer the use of English in various situations, and they rate themselves as being better at speaking English than French, embracing the status and prestige associated with English (Deveau et al., 2005). If these children mastered only English, their own personal connections with their heritage could be weakened (see Park & Sarkar, 2007; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). When youth have weak connections with their heritage, they can have few interactions with their older relatives (Park & Sarkar, 2007) and can have a weak sense of their possible future selves (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). Moreover, speakers who maintain a connection with a minority language show multiple cognitive, social, and psychological benefits (Cummins, Bismilla, Chow, Cohen, Giampapa, Leoni, Sandhu, & Sastri, 2005; Valdés, 2005). Also, in an officially bilingual country like Canada, it is important to have a French-English bilingual workforce.

One approach to encourage the use of French in the francophone schools (both inside and outside the classrooms) is to encourage students' development of a francophone LI. Francophone schools, such as those under the jurisdiction of the CSCN, have attempted to put this notion into practice. Within CSCN's "Guide for Parents", we find the following explicit statement pertaining to the importance of francophonie and LI:

> (2) The francophone school is unique because its mission is both to educate the student who attends it and to protect, promote and transmit the French language and culture of the community it serves. It develops in the student *a strong identity that is personal, linguistic and cultural,* and is open to diversity, likewise it instills a sense of belonging to the Albertan, Canadian and international Francophonie. (p. 7; emphasis added)

Throughout this manuscript, we provide English translations of original French sources in the text (translations done by the first author and verified by the second) and the original French version in **Appendix A**. While it is clear in this quote that the school board wishes to promote a francophone identity, it is not clear whether the youth adopt this LI.

Indeed, there are mixed reports from research as to whether French-speaking youth in Canadian minority settings adopt a francophone LI (Charron, 2017; Jean-Pierre, 2018; Pilote & Canuel, 2013). Some studies have reported that a strong francophone LI is somewhat independent of knowing how to speak French (Aunger, 1999). For example, in the 1991 census, 97.5% of self-identified francophones living in Western Canada knew English, while only 90% of them knew French (Aunger, 1999). Noels et al. (2012) found similar results: self-identified francophones did not always speak French, claiming instead that their francophonie was based on their belonging to the francophone community. In that study, even individuals who could speak French generally preferred to speak English (Noels et al., 2012). Other studies have shown that some French-speaking youth in minority communities in Canada create a hybrid LI, claiming they feel both francophone and anglophone (Bergeron, 2007; Dallaire, 2006). Yet another study found that Albertan French-speaking youths described speaking French as "unnatural," despite describing the wish to pass the language on to their children (Dallaire & Denis, 2005). In sum, it is not clear if francophone schools in Alberta succeed in their endeavour to encourage youth to speak French by supporting their francophone LI.

THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the connection between francophone linguistic identities (LIs) and willingness to communicate in French among French-speaking youth in Alberta. Our objective was to find promising explanations as to why English is so commonly used among youth attending francophone schools, focusing specifically on the role of francophone schools, linguistic identity (LI), and ideal future selves.

As the CSCN places a focus on identity-building to promote the use of French, stating that they (3) "offer a school path that promotes identity building" and focus on (4) "francophone pride" (CSCN: Mission, vision et principes directeurs, 2019), the current study most particularly concentrated on analyzing the existence and possible range of LIs. We were curious to learn whether the students themselves agreed that they had a francophone LI. We expected that students' willingness to communicate in French would be related to multiple factors, including the value that they place on French for their future selves.

To allow for rich and individually diverse responses, focus groups were selected as our study method (Bokhorst-Heng & Keating Marshall, 2019). Focus groups were also ideal as we desired to collect verbal-linguistic data and unrestricted opinions from our participants. Following Bokhorst-Heng and Keating Marshall (2019), our focus groups consisted of two parts: a peer interview and a group discussion. The focus groups were conducted entirely in French.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 12 participants (5 male and 7 female) volunteered to participate in the study. The participants were youth enrolled in three different francophone schools in the cities of Edmonton and St-Albert. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling. They ranged from 13 to 18 years old (M = 15.1) and were from grades 7 to 12. Two focus groups (n = 6) were formed, based on participant availability, one taking place in the morning and another in the afternoon.

Through dyadic peer interviews described in more detail below, our participants claimed various ethnic backgrounds: 4 out of 12 participants said they were of African background, 3 of European/North American background, 2 of Latino background, 1 of Arabic background, 1 Afro-Caribbean background and 1 of mixed European and African background. Furthermore, all students spoke more than one language at home, with 7 out of 12 of them using French in some capacity with parents or siblings. Note that for the other five children, at least one parent knew French but did not use it consistently at home. Other languages aside from French and English spoken at home by participants included Arabic, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili. Whilst we acknowledge that other languages are also part of the participants' linguistic identities, the interview questions focused primarily on the youths' francophone (or anglophone) identities. In the context of the focus group, the participants did have opportunities to refer to other linguistic identities, but rarely chose to do so.

Materials and Procedures

Peer Interview. Participants were placed in pairs and directed to one of our three laboratory cubicles. Pairs were chosen at random. Once inside, they were presented with a 24-item survey in French with two parts which they

were told to use to interview one another (see Appendix A). Part I consisted of open-ended demographic questions. Part II included statements which participants rated on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = Never/Strongly Disagree; 3 = Often/Regularly/Strongly agree.) Nearby computers recorded the audio of the participants' discussion. This survey was developed to gather biographical information as well as home and everyday language practices (Bokhorst-Heng & Keating Marshall, 2019).

Group Discussion. Participants sat around a table in groups of six to discuss 12 questions as a group (see Appendix B). These questions were only presented in French. This discussion was led by a moderator who asked the questions and guided the discussion. Questions that fit our investigative goals were selected from Bokhorst-Heng & Keating Marshall's (2019) study; however, we added others and followed a simpler discussion format. These questions aimed to bring out the LI range that could exist among participants as well as major themes surrounding French language perception. Two different individuals acted as moderators: one with a Belgian accent and the other with a Franco-Albertan accent. While the youth could have switched into English while answering questions, they rarely code-switched, only using the odd lexical item in English, usually in the context of making a point about English usage.

All participants were informed as to the purposes of the study at the outset and were informed that they would be audio-recorded for later data processing. They chose pseudonyms at the beginning of the study. The initials used below refer to pseudonyms rather than their real names.

Analytic Approach

The results of the peer interview were meant to provide descriptive data for these particular participants. We therefore provide descriptive statistics for the participants' responses to each question. As for the group discussions, a thematic analysis was conducted, as is often the case for qualitative studies to describe general patterns and perspectives of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose of the present study was to examine the students' attitudes and perceptions toward French and being francophone. The study was mainly guided by ideas of LI, specifically Deveau et al.'s (2005) theory that includes self-definition and identity engagement. As such, we analyzed transcriptions with these concepts in mind. Indications of a Francophone LI were found which were comparable to Deveau et al.'s (2005) concepts. As well, modified Bokhorst-Heng & Keating Marshall's (2019) group discussion prompts allowed us to gain further insights to create a comprehensive image of our participants' LIs (francophone, anglophone, hybrid), their perceptions about speaking French, about living in a minority context, and about French in their futures.

RESULTS

Peer Interview

Table 1 on the next page summarizes the results of the peer interview. The two questions with the highest agreement were the use of French so that others would not understand and having a francophone friend. The participants also reported that they sometimes spoke French with their friends outside of school. The participants mostly chose the middle of the scale for listening to French music, being familiar with the francophone community, speaking to parents and siblings in French, and reading books and watching movies in French. In contrast, the participants rarely reported watching TV in French or reading a website, newspaper, or magazine in French.

Question	Average (SD), Median response based on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = Never/ Strongly Disagree; 3 = Often/ Regularly/ Strongly agree)
I speak French so that others will not understand what I am saying, other than the person I am speaking to	3.0 (0), 3
I have a francophone friend	3.0 (0), 3
I speak French with my friends outside of school	2.6 (0.7), 3
I listen to French music	2.3 (0.8), 2
I know a lot about the francophone community and culture	2.3 (0.5), 2
I speak to my parents and siblings in French	2.2 (0.8), 2
I read books in French outside of school and schoolwork	2.0 (1.0), 2
I watch movies in French	1.9 (0.5), 2
I speak to a grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousins in French	1.8 (0.9), 1.5
I read comics in French	1.8 (1.0), 1
I read websites in French outside of school and schoolwork	1.7 (1.0), 1
I speak French at restaurants	1.6 (0.7), 1
I watch television in French	1.5 (0.8), 1
I tell jokes in French	1.5 (0.8), 1
I attend a place of worship where French is the main language	1.4 (0.5), 1 Note: Only eight of the participants answered this question; the other four said that it did not apply to them
I speak French to salesclerks when I go shopping	1.3 (0.5), 1
I read magazines in French	1.2 (0.5), 1
I read newspapers in French	1.2 (0.4), 1

Table 1: Average (standard deviation) and median responses to Peer Interview Questionnaire

In sum, the results of this part of the study suggest that the youth occasionally speak French outside of school with peers, but sometimes in a context in which French is a secret language. Their use of French for reading and other media consumption outside of school was low.

Group Discussion

We now turn to a summary of the themes that emerged in the group discussions in terms of the youths' perceptions about speaking French, living in a minority context, and French in their futures.

Being francophone

All participants in both groups defined themselves as francophones. The phrase "I am francophone" (i.e., 'je suis francophone'), or variations of it, was heard multiple times. They commonly referred to identity, culture and community when probed as to why. Much like LI theory positions, participants defined language as being a "part of you":

(5) N: I think a language is part of you, so […] it's your identity (…)

(6) J: It's part of us. I speak several languages; they are all part of me.

Another participant followed up and made sure to state the difference between a francophone, which he self-defined as, and a Francophile, noting that simply knowing French does not make you francophone:

(7) E: It has to do with […] culture. […] If you speak French, but you don't really know […] the traditions and the people […] of the francophone culture, I think you are […] a Francophile not a Francophone.

As well, some described being francophone as a choice. One participant stated the following when speaking about her francophone identity.

(8) S: I can choose to be assimilated into the environment I am in, Alberta, but I want to continue to pursue my language and make efforts to keep it (…).

Another participant in the other group acknowledged the discrepancy between identifying as francophone yet speaking more English, saying that they (francophone students) should try to speak more French since:

(9) I: Being francophone is our choice.

Both groups markedly communicated the existing sense of community and unity that is brought by being a francophone, with a participant stating:

(10) S: It is the Francophone community that identifies us as one person and not several people from different regions and cultures, it unites us.

This sentiment appeared to be shared by most participants, as they came from different ethnic backgrounds yet identified as francophones and as members of the francophone community. This is interesting, as it presents a similarity to Noels and colleagues' (2012) findings that found that among francophones who did not speak French, a sense of community is what contributed to their feelings of self-identification as francophones. In this case,

however, all participants were fluent and comfortable with their French-speaking abilities, perhaps pointing to the idea that a sense of community is in general essential to the creation and upholding of francophone LI, regardless of language use or knowledge.

Speaking French

While francophone LI was saliently expressed by participants, when asked where and when they spoke French, they admitted to not doing it often. Even in the school environment where everything, "except for English class", is in French, they admitted English was their language of choice:

(11) S: Unfortunately, we speak in English, but sometimes we try to speak in French, but it doesn't last long. At least we have this awareness that we should try.

(12) L: In class […] with teachers [...] we speak French, [...] but […] in the hallways it's in English. [...] It just comes more naturally.

Participants also described occasions when their language choice depended on context or on the interlocutor:

(13) E: If I speak with friends who come from Quebec or who come from countries which have French as the first language […] then I try to speak French so that we can communicate better and more easily.

Participants justified that their use of English was due to many factors, including the perception that English is easier and more "interesting":

(14) U: People say it's more difficult [French], I think it's because French has grammar and everything.

(15) Y: I [speak] in English because I'm more fluent, and I'm more comfortable with it.

(16) I: It's more interesting to speak English than French.

When asked why that is, the participant tried to respond, but acknowledged she didn't know the reason:

(17) I: I don't know […] everyone speaks English for … […] I have no idea why.

A student interjected and explained:

(18) N: I think for me it's more interesting […] because English is more valued as a language […] in the world.

When they did opt to speak French, however, they mentioned speaking in a blend of English and French, a concept colloquially known as franglais:

(19) U: We speak French but it's more [of a] […] mixture since we are used to speaking English

Many participants also added that external pressures to speak French, such as teachers telling them to, pushed them to use French:

(20) H: In elementary it was really pushed [to speak French], but after, each year more students [begun to] speak English so it has become more relaxed. Now teachers say nothing to us [when we speak English]. […] If they would tell us something [to speak French], I think it would motivate us.

These students were aware of the contradiction between defining themselves as francophones yet preferring to communicate in English, even in an important environment meant for French communication such as school. Overall, students' reasons for not speaking French as often as English were similar to those expressed by francophone youth from Alberta more than 20 years ago. Dallaire & Denis (2005) wrote that in 1997, the frequent use of English was the main linguistic characteristic that was shared by most francophone youths in the Albertan context. A participant in their ethnographic study even used similar wording as one of our participants: "It is natural to speak English" (Dallaire & Denis, 2005, p. 158).

Perceptions of the minority context

Participants were aware of the struggles the francophone community, and the French language, face in Alberta. Nevertheless, they also recognized some positive aspects of living in that context, most of them pointing to the benefits of speaking and living in two principal languages:

(21) U: I would say it's an advantage to be here because you can keep your francophoneculture and learn English.

(22) E: We can still keep our culture and live as [if] you were francophone here in Alberta.

Other participants highlighted the various cultural components of the community:

(23) R: There is […] a newspaper in French, which is the Franco, and also there are sports programs in French like the Francophone games of Alberta […]. You can learn English too but there are also places where the French community can come together and just […] appreciate the language.

A different participant was one of the few to speak about the use of French in a minority setting, relating that:

(24) U: All we have here is the language [French], so I try to maintain it.

Though francophone LI proved to be very strong among our two focus groups, English's inevitable presence and perceived importance in the minority context was still greatly recognized with two students making the following statements:

(25) N: I would say that not speaking English for some people is […] not what is abnormal, but […] I find that if they had the choice to speak French or English, they would speak English […]. All jobs, not all, but most of them are in English so I find English to be an important language.

(26) E: I like the francophone culture a lot, but at the same time I value my education a lot, so it's sad to see francophone schools or immersion programs that have an education system, like, worse than the anglophone. You have to sacrifice something to keep your culture.

Thus, students communicated their concerns over the French education system's quality and their perceived lack of academic opportunities. Participants' responses were comparable to Deveau et al.'s (2005) explanation of francophones' feelings towards English. Advantages, such as status and prestige, brought by the majority language are highlighted (Deveau et al., 2005).

Yet, participants mainly spoke favourably of their francophone school experiences, most of them having attended those schools since kindergarten. Francophone schools were described by participants as establishments that preserved the language and culture:

(27) H: Outside of school, I'm afraid of losing my French. […] Outside of school, I wouldn't know where to speak French. Everyday, you know that you can go somewhere [francophone schools] where you can learn French and practice your language.

(28) J: The link that I have to the francophonie comes from francophone schools, I could lose it if I go to an anglophone school.

Participants'' ties to being francophone and therefore their engagement with that LI is clear within these schools, with a participant explaining the following when asked if she would attend a francophone school if it were her choice:

(29) I: I would stay in a francophone […] school because we are in an English-speaking environment so we […] have to keep a part of ourselves which is French. […] If we [go to] a […] non-francophone school, we will lose our French at some point and […] the francophonie is important to me since it is […] my mother tongue. […] If [we were] in the anglophone environment [anglophone schools] we would lose our French and that […] would affect us in a way.

Rejection of Anglophone Identity. When asked if they considered themselves to be anglophones, participants strongly rejected this idea. One participant pointed towards a hybrid LI, where a francophone LI was stronger than an anglophone one. Though they admittedly speak English at higher rates by choice and consider themselves to be more proficient in it than French, this is not enough for them to consider themselves anglophones. When asked if they were anglophones, participants detailed the following:

(30) U: I don't do anything English; I don't know the traditions.

(31) E: I do not consider myself an anglophone even though I think I can express myself better in English […] I know a lot more; I am more comfortable […] when it comes to the Francophonie and Francophone schools.

(32) Z: I speak English more than French, but I have a francophone education […] so I'm francophone more than anglophone.

(33) S: I speak better English than French, but I am a francophone who speaks English.

This is consistent with past literature, where francophones in a minority context rate themselves as being better English speakers and use the language more often, yet still indicate high adherence to a francophone identity and chose it over an anglophone one (Aunger, 1999; Deveau et al., 2005; Noels et al., 2012). A francophone LI clearly exists within these CSCN students, and, unlike our predictions, may not be as variable as we expected. It was stronger than the anglophone LI. On the surface, this LI is guided and formed by basic factors that are related to social feelings of belongingness rather than use of language.

Participants were also much more comfortable defining themselves as bilinguals, or as having hybrid identities, rather than referring to themselves as anglophones, one even asserting that being bilingual is more important than just speaking French:

(34) E: I think it's more valuable to be bilingual than just [speaking] French.

They were capable of ranking French and English in the order relating to the degree to which they identify with it; note that the participants who spoke more than two languages only rarely made reference to their other language(s). Participants ranked French higher than English, and those who spoke more than the two languages at times ranked the language spoken by their families higher:

(35) L: Spanish first, then French, and then English, despite the fact that I speak English more often.

French in their future

A theme of intergenerational francophone identity was also detected. One participant linked her LI to her family history, and how she chooses to maintain her language. This points to ideas relevant to L2MSS theory, most specifically the ought-to-be self:

(36) S: My ancestors spoke French, my parents and my friends [too], there is an obligation that I be francophone and I represent my family, my ancestors, my friends. There is this family obligation but also it is my choice because I make an effort not to lose my language.

They see French in their future as they explain their wishes for their children to also speak it. They clarify that having a spouse that speaks French is not crucial, as they believe having one French-speaking parent (i.e., themselves) should suffice to transfer the language, pointing again to ideas relevant to L2MSS theory, namely ideal future selves. They want continuity, with a participant relating that:

(37) E: I don't want my children to assimilate into the Anglophone culture.

(38) Y: My spouse [speaking French], that's not really a priority [...] but my children, I want them to speak French.

Other participants agreed and one of them also explained the following:

(39) I: If I have children, I want them to learn French […]. Francophonie is [...] like a really interesting [...] culture and […] there are lots of things to learn and there are more advantages [...].

It seems that with participants' own self-identification as francophones comes the desire to transmit the language to their future children. However, this desire seems difficult to attain, and perhaps unrealistic, considering their admitted low use of French and the lack of importance they place on marrying a person that speaks French.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to explore whether minority-French-speaking youths' willingness to speak French was supported by francophone schools, a francophone LI, and the creation of an ideal future self that would speak French. These youths lived in an English-majority-language community and attended francophone schools. As indicated by the CSCN (CSCN, Programmes d'étude, n.d.), the youth were capable of speaking French: all of them spoke entirely in French during the interviews. Nonetheless, they admitted that they spoke a lot of English and preferred to speak English, as has been found in other studies of francophones in Alberta (Aunger, 1999; Noels et al., 2012). Furthermore, the participants came from different schools, some with a reputation of being 'more French' than others and yet all reported a preference for speaking English (see similar results in Landry, Allard, & Théberge, 1991). Although they reported that they spoke to their friends in French, hearing their descriptions of French communication with their peers added the nuance that these conversations were relatively rare, or if they happened, they were inspired by ulterior motives. For instance, the participants explained that they used French when they wanted to ensure that others would not understand what they were saying (e.g., at a soccer game to keep the other team from knowing what they are planning), or in moments where participants feel casually inspired to momentarily speak French.

The youth in this study were imagining French in their future. Not only did they say that they valued their ability to speak French, they also expressed wishes for their children to learn it. Some of them imagined speaking French with their children. However, they did not present explicit ways by which they would make this achievable, considering that English is omnipresent within their daily lives and they spoke French only rarely outside of school.

Surprisingly, we found similarity across individuals for their linguistic identity (LI): they felt strongly francophone. Furthermore, they did not feel anglophone. These results contrast markedly with results from previous studies showing that French-speaking youth either rejected a francophone identity (Allard & Denis, 2005) or formed a hybrid francophone-anglophone identity (Bergeron, 2007; Dallaire, 2006). While a few of the youth in this study reported a hybrid identity, it was more common to report a francophone identity. The youth recognized the inherent contradiction in feeling francophone and preferring to speak English. They resolved this contradiction by defining their francophone identity as a feeling of belonging to the francophone communities, in particular to francophone schools. Their responses showcase the francophone schools' success in instilling a sense of belonging to the francophone community.

These results of the present study resonate with results of one study that took place in Wales. Price and Tamburelli (2016) found that adolescents educated in Welsh-language schools used Welsh primarily or only in formal settings. For this reason, they did not feel like Welsh was part of their own personal culture or identity. The youth in our study may have spoken in French in the focus groups, precisely because the moderators may have been perceived as authority figures. There is, however, one key difference between the Welsh students and the francophone students in this study. In this study, the youth said that they would switch to French when speaking to individuals from "other" French-speaking parts of Canada (e.g., Quebec) or the world. This response opens up one possible way that francophone schools in minority settings could encourage greater use of French. Schools might encourage

authentic communication with youth elsewhere, perhaps through video conferencing. If provided with opportunities for authentic communication in French with francophones from other communities, francophone youth in English-majority-language contexts might not only be proud of their French, they may also use it more often.

In sum, this study has shown that French-speaking youth in an English-majority-language context use English extensively despite embracing a francophone identity and imagining French in their future. These results suggest that the francophone schools are effective in supporting the construction of a francophone identity among their students. However, the youth associate their francophone identity with a feeling of belongingness to the francophone community, particularly francophone schools, not with speaking French. We have argued that connecting youth in francophone schools in minority settings with youth in other francophone communities would further encourage their use of French in informal settings. In doing so, they will be more likely to attain their own ideals: raising their children to speak French.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix A

(1) « solide maitrise de la langue française » (CSCN, Programmes d'étude, n.d.).

(2) L'école francophone est unique parce que sa mission est à la fois d'éduquer l'élève qui la fréquente et de protéger, de valoriser et de transmettre la langue française et la culture de la communauté qu'elle dessert. Elle développe chez l'élève une identité personnelle, linguistique et culturelle forte et ouverte à la diversité, de même qu'un sentiment d'appartenance à la francophonie albertaine, canadienne et internationale (CSCN: L'école francophone: guide pour parents., n.d., p. 7)

(3) « un cheminement scolaire qui favorise la construction identitaire » (CSCN : Mission, vision et principes directeurs, 2019)

(4) « fierté francophone » (CSCN: Mission, vision et principes directeurs, 2019)

(5) N: Moi je pense qu'une langue fait partie de toi donc […] c'est ton identité.

(6) J: Ça fait partie de nous. Moi, je parle plusieurs langues, elles font toutes partie de moi.

(7)J : ça a rapport avec [...] la culture. [...] Je pense pas que si tu parles le français mais tu sais pas trop [...] les traditions et les gens [...] de la culture francophone je pense que tu es [...] un francophile pas un francophone.

(8) S: Je peux choisir d'être assimilée dans l'environnement dans lequel je suis, l'Alberta, mais je veux continuer à poursuivre ma langue et faire des efforts de la garder.

(9) I: Être francophone c'est notre choix.

(10) S: C'est la communauté francophone qui nous identifie comme une personne et pas plusieurs personnes de différents régions et cultures, ça nous unit.

(11) S: Malheureusement, nous parlons anglais, mais parfois nous essayons de parler français, mais ça ne dure pas longtemps. Au moins, nous avons cette conscience qu'on devrait essayer.

(12) L: Dans les classes, avec les profs on parle [...] français, mais [...] dans les corridors c'est en anglais. [...] Ça vient juste plus naturellement.

(13) E: Si je parle avec des amis qui viennent du Québec ou qui viennent des pays où la première langue est [...] français alors j'essaye de parler français pour qu'ils puissent se communiquer mieux et plus facilement.

(14) U: Les gens disent que c'est plus difficile, je pense que c'est parce que le français il y a la grammaire puis tout.

(15) Y: Je [parle] en anglais parce que je suis plus fluide et je suis plus confortable avec.

(16) I: C'est plus intéressant de parler en anglais qu'en français.

(17) I: Je sais pas [...] tout le monde parle en anglais pour [...] je n'ai aucune idée pourquoi.

(18) N: Je pense que pour moi c'est plus intéressant [...] à cause que l'anglais est une langue plus valorisée [...] dans le monde.

(19) U: On parle français mais c'est plus [...] un mélange puisqu'on est habitués de parler anglais.

(20) H: En élémentaire, c'était vraiment poussé [de parler français], mais après, à chaque année, plus d'élèves parlent anglais, donc c'est devenu plus relax. Maintenant, les enseignants ne nous disent rien [quand nous parlons anglais]. [...] S'ils nous disaient quelque chose [de parler français], je pense que cela nous motiverait.

(21) U: Je dirais que c'est un avantage être ici parce que tu peux garder ta culture francophone et apprendre l'anglais.

(22) E: On peut encore garder notre culture et vivre comme tu étais francophone ici en Alberta.

(23) R: Il y a comme un journal en français, qui est le Franco, et aussi il y a des programmes de sports en français comme les jeux francophones de l'Alberta [...] tu peux apprendre l'anglais aussi mais il y a aussi des places où la communauté française peut se rejoindre et juste [...]apprécier la langue.

(24) S: Tout ce qu'on a ici c'est la langue, alors j'essaye de la maintenir.

(25) N: Je dirais que ne pas parler anglais pour certaines personnes n'est [...] pas ce qui est anormal, mais [...] je trouve que s'ils avaient le choix de parler français ou anglais, ils parlaient anglais [...]. Tous les travails, pas tous, mais la plupart sont en anglais donc je trouve que l'anglais est une langue importante.

(26) E: Moi j'aime beaucoup la culture francophone, mais en même temps je valorise beaucoup mon éducation, alors c'est triste de voir comme des écoles francophones ou des programmes d'immersion qui ont un système d'éducation, comme, pire que ceux des anglophones. Tu dois sacrifier quelque chose pour garder ta culture.

(27) H: En dehors de l'école, j'ai peur de perdre mon français. [...] En dehors de l'école, je ne saurais pas où parler français. À chaque journée, tu sais que tu peux aller quelque part ou tu peux apprendre le français et exercer ta langue.

(28) J: Le lien que j'ai avec la francophonie vient des écoles francophones, je pourrais le perdre si je vais dans une école anglophone.

(29) I: Moi je resterais dans une école francophone [...] parce qu'on est dans un milieu anglophone donc on doit [...] garder une partie de nous-mêmes qui est le [...] français. [...] Si on reste [...] dans des écoles non francophones on va perdre notre français à un moment et [...] la francophonie est importante pour moi puisque c'est [...] ma langue maternelle. [...] Si on reste dans le milieu anglophone on perdrait notre français et ça [...] nous affecterait d'une façon.

(30) U: Je ne fais rien d'anglais, je ne connais pas les traditions.

(31) E: Je me considère pas un anglophone même si je pense que je peux m'exprimer mieux en anglais [...] je sais beaucoup plus, je suis plus confortable [...] quand ça vient à la francophonie et les écoles francophones.

(32) Z: Je parle anglais plus que français mais j'ai une éducation francophone [...] donc, je suis francophone plus qu'anglophone.

(33) S: Je parle mieux l'anglais que le français, mais je suis une francophone qui parle anglais

(34) E: Je pense que ça vaut plus d'être bilingue que juste [parler] français.

(35) L: En premier l'espagnol, puis le français, et l'anglais, malgré le fait que je parle anglais plus souvent.

(36) S: Mes ancêtres parlaient français, mes parents et mes amis, il y a une obligation que je sois francophone et je représente ma famille, mes ancêtres, mes amis. Il y a cette obligation familiale mais aussi c'est mon choix parce que je fais des efforts pour ne pas perdre la langue.

(37) E: Je ne veux pas que mes enfants s'assimilent à la culture anglophone.

(38) Y: Mon époux, ça c'est pas vraiment [...] une priorité mais mes enfants je veux qu'ils parlent français.

(39) I: Si j'ai des enfants, je veux qu'ils apprennent français […]. La francophonie c'est [...] comme une culture vraiment [...] intéressante et [...] il y a plein de choses à apprendre et il y a plus d'avantages [...].

Appendix B

Discussion Guide

Number of Items: 12

Instructions: In groups of 6, participants sat around a table et discussed the questions below. This discussion was led by a moderator.

1. What does "Francophone " mean? Are you a Francophone?

2. What language (s) do you speak with your friends at school? Why?

*3. Why do you attend a francophone school? If it was entirely your choice, would you go to a francophone school?

*4. Are you an Anglophone? Why or why not?

*5. When did you start learning French?

6. What can a second language be used for?

*7. When you have a husband or wife and children, would it be important for them to speak French?

8. What skills do you acquire by speaking French?

9. Where and when do you speak French? Why?

10. Do you have French speaking friends?

11. What does French mean to you?

12. Imagine that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages asked you to produce a video promoting the Francophonie in Alberta. Your audience for this video will be made up of students from Quebec who may not even know that there are francophones in Alberta. What would you say?

Source: Bokhorst-Heng, W., & Marshall, K. K. (2019). Informing research (practices) through pedagogical theory: Focus groups with adolescents. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 42*(2), 148-162. Doi:10.1080/1743727X.2018.1449195

Note: The questions used for the study were adapted from Bokhorst-Heng & Marshall (2019). The questions that appear here without an asterisk are the ones that appear in Bokhorst-Heng & Marshall (2019), whereas the ones with an asterisk were created from the authors of this paper for the purposes of their study.