

Nurturing Language Identities in the Early French Immersion Classroom

by

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NURTURING LANGUAGE IDENTITIES

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Abstract

This work investigates ideas surrounding bilingualism in Canada, the role of language teachers, and linguistic identities. Of interest to this researcher is not only how people acquire language, but how people develop a sense of personal ownership of language(s), otherwise known as a strong affiliation with the language. A review of the research uncovers the ideologies at play in journeys towards language acquisition and the most effective pedagogical practices for encouraging students to increase their sense of language expertise and strengthen their language affiliation(s) all while honouring connections to their heritage language(s). This review focuses on early French immersion (this researcher's teaching context) whenever possible; however, the relevant current research which extends beyond French immersion specific context is also included; such as the research of dual language immersion programs in Canada and the United States, and the Indigenous language immersion programs in Canada. The role of government in promoting linguistic duality in Canada is interrogated. The project component of this work takes the shape of a personal website which this researcher uses to share personal stories about the journey from language learner to language teacher learner on the west coast of Canada. Reflections on professional practice are shared with a focus on practical strategies for strengthening learners' language affiliations by promoting oral language production, making language thinking visible in the classroom, and promoting positive language identities for all community members.

Keywords: Linguistic identity, French immersion, bilingualism, translanguaging, language acquisition, multilingual perspectives, visible thinking, Canada

Résumé

Ce travail explore les discours sur le bilinguisme au Canada, le rôle des enseignants de langues, et l'identité linguistique. Cette chercheuse s'intéresse non seulement à l'acquisition linguistique, mais aussi au développement personnel d'appartenance à la langue (aux langues), aussi connu comme ayant une(des) forte(s) affiliation(s) linguistique(s). Une revue de la recherche révèle les idéologies en jeu en route vers l'acquisition linguistique et les approches pédagogiques les plus efficaces à inciter les élèves d'améliorer leur expertise linguistique et renforcer leur(s) affiliation(s) linguistique(s) tout en honorant les liens avec les langues du patrimoine. Cette revue vise l'immersion précoce (le contexte d'enseignement de cette chercheuse) dès que possible; cependant, les recherches actuelles pertinentes qui vont au-delà du contexte d'immersion française sont incluses; telles que celles des programmes d'immersion bilingues au Canada et aux États-Unis, et celles des programmes d'immersion en langues indigènes au Canada. Le rôle du gouvernement canadien en promouvant la dualité linguistique est interrogé. La composante projet du travail prend forme d'un site-web personnel que la chercheuse utilise pour partager ses expériences comme apprenant de langue devenue enseignante-apprenant de langue sur la côte ouest du Canada. Ses réflexions sur la pratique professionnelle sont aussi partagées avec une attention particulière sur les stratégies pratiques qui servent à renforcer les affiliations linguistiques chez les apprenants de langues en promouvant la production orale, les moyens de faire visible la pensée linguistique en salle de classe, et les moyens de promouvoir des identités linguistiques positives pour tous les membres de la communauté.

Mots clés: Identité linguistique, immersion française, bilinguisme, translangage, acquisition langagière, perspectives plurilingues, pensée visible, Canada

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Beyond this first French teacher, I wish to acknowledge the many French speakers who have contributed to the relational and socially negotiated process of my own language identity making. Thank you for the sense of belonging you have given me in and through the language.

Additionally, I wish to acknowledge my closest friends and my extended family who have supported me these past two years (and indulged me in many a conversation about language identities, language teaching and learning, and ancestral connections) as I have pursued this Master's degree. I am most grateful for these graduate studies and all my professors at the University of Victoria. This program of studies in curriculum leadership has pushed me to consider a wider circle of viewpoints which extends to all of creation. I have come to feel very grateful for the connected nature of this learning and the deeply stimulating thoughts I have encountered. Thank-you to my professors for your incredibly skillful teaching.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Interrogating Language Identities

What is your first language? What language(s) do your parents speak? What language(s) did your ancestors speak? If your culture is in your language; who are you now, as you become a speaker of another tongue? My name is Kelsey Sheean Anderson. My first tongue was English. I began learning French at school in the sixth grade and fell in love with the language, the learning, and the possibilities it offered me. I expanded myself with this learning and French became a passion for me. Now, others are often surprised to learn it is not the language of my parents. My father's tongue is also English, but he is a learner of Finnish. It was the language of his mother and his ancestors. Mine too. I have seen how quickly a language can be lost: one generation. I have borne witness to the fight of my father to retain language, culture, connection to ancestors, and sense of identity. My mother's language is English. Most of her ancestors spoke English; some spoke Gaelic, and we know some may have spoken another tongue, but we don't know the full extent of these histories. Language losses have occurred in all ancestral lines of my family. As I consider my role as a kindergarten French Immersion teacher, and as a bilingual Canadian, I seek to better understand the role of developing language identities. Through this learning, I come to know myself better, my languages, my ancestors, and my role as a teacher of language. My own questions surrounding my personal language identity have led me to this work.

French Immersion teachers teach language and culture wrapped up together. I have come to realize that much of culture is embedded in words and the ways we use them to communicate. My experiences have left me with two languages, but not exactly two cultures. As we seek to understand the other, we become changed beings. This space between is very similar to the space

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in which our early learners will find themselves. Our learners bring their home language(s) with them to school while they learn French. New linguistic identities are forged as multiple perspectives and languages are introduced. Even as we introduce a new language, we strive to honour the many languages with which children communicate, discover, and learn. Speaking is only one. Children express their understandings and discoveries through art, constructions, experiments, math, dance, emotions, sculptures, photography, and more. The many expressions of the child are honoured in our classrooms. For the purposes of this research project, I wish to exclude these other languages/ways of communicating and focus closely on spoken and written language. Moreover, I wish to uncover new ways to support positive language identities for young language learners and encourage oral language production. Since it is in speaking the language that I have personally felt an increase in my sense of language ownership, I am particularly motivated to help empower learners to use their voices to claim their languages. I am looking for ways to make the thinking of our young learners more visible as they translanguage and become increasingly fluent in the “target” language. I have questions about how we are valuing language development in the field, and I am interested in considering ways to support a positive sense of self for early learners.

This literature review will evaluate the respective roles of language teacher and language learners in the French immersion classroom. The theoretical framework will set the stage for immersive pedagogy; French immersion ideologies in Canada will be broadly identified but will remain situated in the western context. The complex history surrounding language ownership in Canada will be explored only briefly to set the context for this review. Early language learners and the development of their linguistic identities will be a main focus. Since identities are evolving and developing in a social context, the teacher identities will be considered in

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relationship with those of the young learners themselves. This section will focus on research surrounding emerging bilingual identities within the context of bilingual or multilingual education. Research, which identifies practices to support positive identities for language learners in the areas of oral language, will be examined in depth since this gives way to the practical application of the study.

Research reveals that teacher practices have a direct and important impact on student oral language production. What teachers do and how they do it matters. Motivating students to communicate in the target language without dishonouring home languages can be a challenge for French immersion teachers. As such, this project (Chapter 3) will focus specifically on meaningful oral language production and practices which make the thinking of young language learners more visible in our classrooms. Practices which create space for meaningful interactions among learners in the classroom, including teacher-learners, and highlight the language thinking moves will be identified.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The process by which language(s) are acquired in both children and adults is of interest to researchers and educators. Research about language acquisition has been conducted in several fields: education, neuroscience, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Of interest to this researcher is not only how people acquire language, but how people develop a sense of personal ownership of language(s), otherwise known as a strong affiliation with the language. This brings me to an interest in language identity. To whom does the language belong? Questions surrounding language affiliation and sense of identity become increasingly important as people of today's global society are more interested in becoming bilingual or multilingual. As such, language teachers assume an important role. A review of the research will uncover the ideologies at play in journeys towards language acquisition and the most effective pedagogical practices for encouraging students to increase their sense of language expertise and strengthen their language affiliation(s) all while honouring connections to their heritage language(s). This review will focus on early French immersion (this researcher's teaching context) whenever possible; however, the relevant current research which extends beyond French immersion specific context will be included; such as the research of dual language immersion programs in Canada and the United States, and the Indigenous language immersion programs in Canada. Since the context is of particular importance when considering the dimensions of language teaching and learning, the relationships between the macro (ideological), meso (institutional), and micro (classroom level) will be examined (De Costa & Norton, 2017).

Context.

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Historically, language has been viewed as something directly linked to territory and the people who inhabit it. Controlling territory used to be synonymous with controlling language. This is no longer the case. Linguistic, social, and cultural landscapes are altered by the large number of people and resources crossing multiple borders, and the advances in digital technologies (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Hamman, 2018). While these effects are being experienced on a global scale, Canada has its own unique history. Our history of territorial and language disputes have long been documented as occurring solely between English speakers and French speakers, but this is not the case. Many other language groups, most notably Indigenous language groups, have been subject to government mandated schooling in the two majority languages of Canada (English and French) following colonization. In the case of Indigenous peoples, these efforts were explicitly put in place via government policies to eradicate their languages and their culture. Reports by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) have drawn attention to this fact; since education has been identified as the single greatest contributing factor toward the era of assimilation of Indigenous peoples, it has also been identified as a key pathway towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. This researcher acknowledges the longstanding history of the Indigenous peoples on these lands and is supportive of their language revitalization efforts. The significant government funding for French immersion, as depicted in the Government of Canada's (2008-2013) *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality*, demonstrates government promoted sense of bilingual identity in our Country. "The Government of Canada considers linguistic duality not only as a basis of Canadian identity, but also an essential tool for ensuring Canadian's openness to the world" (p. 10). Following the expiration of this document in March of 2013, the revised version, *Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages (2013-2018)*, continues to describe bilingualism as a unifying force and demonstrates ongoing

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commitment of federal funding towards strengthening linguistic duality. The role of the Government of Canada and the provincial curriculums for French immersion in the sense of linguistic identity have not been investigated by researchers; these effects would be difficult to study as they are so complex. Nonetheless, this researcher wishes to make mention of the Government of Canada's role in the questions surrounding linguistic identity and echo the sentiments of the TRC's (2015) *Calls to Action* surrounding Indigenous language education. The recent release of the Government of Canada's *Investing in Our Future 2018-2023 Action Plan for Official Languages* reaffirms the government's commitment to investing in official languages and promoting a bilingual identity. While this document does make mention of Indigenous languages, it offers no official statement of federal funding for Indigenous language education. It is the hope of this researcher that the Government of Canada offer federal education funding to Indigenous language immersion programs, that heritage and Indigenous languages be promoted in all classrooms including early French immersion classrooms, so that we might become a country that is not constrained to linguistic duality. As such, this literature review will focus closely on promoting a sense of linguistic identity within the micro context of the early French immersion classroom while considering the meso and macro contexts. Please note that some research from the context of current Indigenous language immersion programs will be included in this review. The work being done by teachers and researchers in these programs is of significant importance to questions surrounding language identities even though they extend beyond the scope of this writer's context and final project work in Chapter 3. There is a significant overlap in the research findings for strong immersion pedagogies for additional languages (such as French) and Indigenous languages.

French immersion origins and pedagogies.

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French immersion was first introduced in the late 1960s following the inception of the Official Language Act with four main objectives (Roy, 2010; Roy & Galiev, 2011). These included sustaining the development of the learners' first language, in addition to "allowing students to become functionally bilingual, learn subject content equivalent to that taught in the English-language mainstream program, and better understand the culture of Francophones" (Roy, 2010, p. 542). Since that time, a unique culture of French immersion has emerged. Several tensions exist within this culture, some of which are of particular interest to my investigation into language identities and language ownership. The more you speak a language the greater your sense of ownership and affiliation becomes (Rampton, 1990). There is no singular proven pathway or pedagogical best practice for oral language production: a great deal of debate around the most effective pathways has emerged over time.

This research is situated within the context of traditional views of strong immersion pedagogy which continue to dominate the field. Strong immersion has a goal of additive bilingualism, with the target language used as the primary language of instruction (Morcom, 2017). While French immersion programs have been largely successful in meeting their initial goals, it has not been without criticism. From the time of Lyster's (1987) iconic research "Speaking immersion" which laid claim to the need for new methodologies in French immersion in order to better meet learners' needs for interlanguage opportunities (and thus prevent and correct the fossilized language errors, or anglicismes, which were becoming all too common in immersion students), there have been shifting views in the role of additional languages in the teaching of a new target language.

Lyster's (2007) internationally reclaimed work, *Learning and teaching languages through content: A counterbalanced approach*, which integrates thematic and content-based

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instruction with language instruction, has been championed by the Association canadienne des professionnels d'immersion, resulting in a collaboration which lead to his (2016) French book. While parts of this approach call for biliteracy instruction, this work makes very little mention of instructional application for learners whose L1 is not English. The biliteracy scaffolding it proposes is not to enhance sense of identity nor cultural richness; this use of English (or L1) is intentionally introduced by the teacher to support a deeper understanding of linguistic patterns and structures. The thematic and content connections in biliteracy aspects of the approach are preplanned with specific intent to connect to provincially mandated curriculum, not emergent nor culturally responsive as some alternative approaches we read about in bilingual and multilingual research.

Immersion pedagogy is frequently described as content and language integrated instruction (CLIL) (Dressler, 2018). This pedagogical approach emphasizes oral communication and learning of the language in and through the teaching of content (Dressler, 2018). Such practices include experiential learning and naturalistic use of the target language (Dressler, 2018). CLIL programs exist across the globe, several have been modelled after research documenting the early success of the French immersion program in Canada (Somers, 2017). Additional terms exist to describe CLIL such as content based language education (CBL). However, controversy is now arising over what constitutes strong pedagogy in bilingual education when it comes to language use overall.

Language separation.

Historically, French immersion pedagogies have pushed for language separation. This is the strict separation of languages in bilingual education wherein languages are viewed as completely distinct linguistic systems (Roy, 2010). The earliest instructions to teachers of French

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immersion forbade references to students' other languages through code-switching or metalinguistic reference (Dressler, 2018). Teachers were encouraged to present themselves as monolingual (even if they were bilingual) and to keep their languages separate (Dressler, 2018).

A new trend in the early years of French immersion education is AIM, the Accelerated Integrative Methodology. While this methodology was initially designed for second language acquisition in FSL (French as a Second Language) programs, AIM learning recently released new resources which tailor the program to an immersion context for the early years and is being promoted by several districts. The major tenets of the methodology include storytelling, gestures, active collaboration, and repetition; the program requires a strong adhesion to the pedagogies of language separation. There is little published, peer-reviewed research into the effectiveness of the methodology overall; existing research reflects inconsistent findings (Arnott, 2017). Arnott (2017) conducted a study into the implementation of this methodology, where the scope of the study focused more closely on pedagogical reform and micro-policy implementation in Canada. Within the context of Arnott's (2017) study, teachers report varying degrees of success with the implementation for this approach in language separation. This study is of particular interest to this researcher as I have been exploring the methodology in my own classroom over the past three years. While I have personal experience with the contrasting views and approaches identified to date; I still don't have a clear understanding of the most effective approach to building learners' sense of language ownership and maximizing oral language production. The area of significant challenge for me in my practice remains the French-only rule to which I am not entirely faithful. My own experiences remain anecdotal within the scope of the research and do not constitute grounds for consideration on the larger scale; however, they do inform my interest into the current research findings surrounding the AIM methodology. I'm not convinced

it can be considered a useful tool in terms of measuring a sense of language ownership since the learners aren't making choices surrounding their language use. If we make the target language mandatory, we won't ever know if the learner would choose to use it. Yet, without requiring sufficient practice learners may not develop their language expertise sufficiently to make speaking in the target language a favourable choice.

Translanguaging.

An alternative approach to language separation has recently gained a great deal of attention in the field of bilingual and multilingual education: this approach is translanguaging (initially coined in the 1980s). “Translanguaging refers to the act of languaging between systems that have been described as separate, and beyond them” (García & Wei, 2013, p. 42). This approach has been hailed as a socially just and socially responsive pedagogy which counters monolingual norms and contributes to decolonization by liberating the voices of language-minoritized students (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García & Wei, 2013; Hurst & Mona, 2017). Dressler (2018) argues translanguaging, or flexible bilingualism, in addition to reflecting natural bilingual usage, can provide an additive component to immersion pedagogy (rather than running counter to it). Recent research in the field of applied linguistics and bilingual education surrounding translanguaging continues to impact L2 (second language) pedagogies and claim the attention of language teachers. Translanguaging as an approach draws on the full linguistic repertoire of the individual to maximize understanding and achievement (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). It begins with the speaker; rather than selecting a language to use in a particular social setting, the speaker selects resources with which to communicate from their repertoire (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). “In its transdisciplinarity, translanguaging enables speakers to go beyond traditional academic disciplines and conventional structures, in order to gain new understandings

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of human relations and generate more just social structures, capable of liberating the voices of the oppressed” (García & Wei, 2013, p. 42). When translanguaging is permitted, learners do not need to abandon a key aspect of self (their home language) in order to assimilate into a majority culture.

Are we creating space for translanguaging in French immersion? Is French immersion exempt from the call to translanguage since families choose the program? Would translanguaging threaten language acquisition of minority languages such as French in predominantly anglophone contexts? Much of the research surrounding translanguaging has studied the impact of minority language speakers being encouraged to translanguage while they learn a majority language. In French immersion in western Canada, many of our learners’ first language is the majority language (English). Further to this, many French immersion programs in western Canada (such as those in my district) operate within dual language schools (these schools offer two program streams: one in the majority language, English, and one in the minority language, French). Most services and whole school events are offered only in the majority language in such dual language program schools. Not only do French immersion teachers feel a deep need to guide the language of communication in the classroom towards the target language and away from the majority language, but it can be the greatest challenge. Current government provincially mandated curriculum for French immersion in the early years calls for 100% of the instruction to occur in the target language (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1996). Current research suggests multilingual language learners stand to benefit the most from translanguaging as a pedagogical approach. Is it possible for French immersion teachers to create classroom environments which allow for this culturally responsive pedagogy without giving way to the majority language? Will it achieve the desired effects of interrogating

linguistic inequality? Seeking answers to these questions is beyond the scope of this writer's current graduate studies. While I see a gap in the research specific to the Canadian French immersion context, Creese and Blackledge (2015) and García and Wei (2013) would argue that translanguaging pedagogy does not belong to the school, nor the home, but that is it within the practice of the learner as it emerges through social interaction.

Code-switching.

Code-switching, an established term in the field of sociolinguistics, is used to describe the quick interchange from one language to another in order to substitute unknown terms within a language repertoire of terms without simple direct translations (also described as register switching). Creese and Blackledge (2015) claim this term has exhausted its limits of descriptive and explanatory adequacy in the face of today's more complex linguistic blends. Terms which are not easily translated have been thought of as those which contain the "codes" to cultural meaning, but Creese, Blackledge (2015) and others argue this focus on linguistic features as authorized codes contributes to the neglect of socially indexical resources within languages. Code-switching differs from translanguaging in that only a word or two are used in the non-target language, while sincere efforts/intents are to remain in the target language (promotes functional separation of languages). Roy and Galiev's (2011) study revealed some teachers have a "tolerance for code-switching in a classroom setting [because it] creates and sustains students' positive attitudes towards bilingualism and French language learning" (p. 368). However, their study also shows that "code-switching is not necessarily accepted as part of the ideology of bilingualism by those affiliated with immersion programs" (Roy & Galiev, 2011, p. 371). Teachers may find it easier to allow for code-switching in their classrooms as opposed to

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offering the high degree of scaffolding necessary in order to facilitate the degree of fluency required in a language separation pedagogy.

Codemeshing.

Codemeshing refers to a shuttle between language repertoires, but for purposes of resistance (García & Wei, 2013). Codemeshing differs from code-switching in that is not used due to a lack of language base in one language or another, but rather to reject or reappropriate and/or transform local and academic discourse (García & Wei, 2013). The term was coined by Canagarajah in 2011 and by his definition it is especially used in writing for rhetorical effectiveness (as cited in García & Wei, 2013).

Language and identity research.

Many fields of study examine the ideas of language identity from slightly different vantage points. Several studies are ethnographic in nature and rely on interview transcriptions, classroom observations, and data coding for keywords. These studies tend to occur over long periods of time since ideas around identity are evolving and changing. Studies which seek to examine the perspectives of young learners often also include additional surveys of parents, teachers, and administrators. This writer believes in the holistic approach and values studies which have encompassed a wider scope. Studies which investigate oral language production and specific practices which promote positive language identities from an instructional perspective also tend to occur over long periods of time, include interviews, document oral language production using classroom observations, videography, and transcriptions. Again, these studies often evaluate learning which is more relational, reflective, grounded in sense of place, and experiential in nature. Such studies often include interviews which consult both teacher-learners and student-learners demonstrating these values. This writer places greater weight on studies

which reflect these values. Studies which evaluate language competence will not be excluded, though they tend to be limited to brief interviews followed by transcriptions and data coding, but the evidence they provide will serve a different purpose in this writer's research.

Language Identities

Sense of identity is constantly evolving; linguistic identities are no exception. Creese and Blackledge's (2015) research investigates the relationship between language and identity, arguing that one does not necessarily equal another. As language speakers and language learners, certain linguistic identities are formed and strengthened over time. These identities can be tied to expertise (i.e. linguistic competence), affiliation (i.e. formal or informal connections), or inheritance (familial connections) (Rampton, 1990). A review of the research identifies the importance of relationships due to the sociocultural nature of language acquisition. A great deal of recent educational research depicts the process of identity making as relational and socially negotiated (Reeves 2009).

Studies feature teachers and students engaged in identity negotiations where individuals claim, assign, and reject identities in relation to others, including in relation to other teachers and students. The relational nature of identity means individuals are no longer the sole constructors of their identity, that identity is no longer viewed as an entirely internal process. Rather, identity is constructed with interested others. (Reeves, 2009, p. 34)

Di Stefano (2017) identifies sense of belonging and language practices as the two main contributors toward the development of fluid and hybrid linguistic identities. In the early French immersion classroom, it is thus important to consider the relationships of the language learner-speakers who share the space. Therefore, I examine research pertaining to the linguistic identities

of the language teachers themselves as well as those of the emerging bilingual/multilingual learners. The current nature of society which reaches beyond the territory calls for consideration of translinguistic histories. Multilingual practices which allow learners to draw on their full language repertoires will be highlighted.

Language Ownership.

Bilingualism in Canada has often been questioned and challenged by “native speakers” (Roy & Galiev, 2011). “Native speakers” are those who define, evaluate, and set the criteria for inclusion or exclusion from the group (Roy & Galiev, 2011). Monolingual performance has often been characterized as the ideal. Rampton (1990) would take issue with the terms native or maternal language speakers and non-native language speakers, arguing for alternative terminology such as language expertise, language affiliation, and language inheritance. Despite the fact that Rampton’s research was conducted almost thirty years ago, the term “native speaker” remains highly prevalent and just as charged today as it was in 1990. However, Roy and Galiev (2011) articulate that for many Canadian francophones, French is more than just a resource, it “symbolizes resistance to the hegemony of the predominantly English-speaking population” (p. 371). This line of thinking is why many argue “bilingualism in Canada is not only about speaking like a native speaker but also about living in the culture.” This brings us to questions about where and for whom individuals are using the language. Many non-native speakers, including many language teachers in French immersion, struggle to claim the language.

It is essential to consider the process of development of one’s sense of membership and belonging on the basis of spoken language in order to design instructional practices which support this process (Di Stefano, 2017). Di Stefano’s (2017) research draws in part on strong connections to families’ countries of origin (language inheritance), but also highlights that direct

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one-to-one correspondence (language to country) is not valid in the US because it is considered a multilingual country. Her 10-week ethnographic study examined how emergent bilinguals bridge belonging and language in northeastern US third grade dual language Spanish and English immersion classes. Dual language immersion programs differ from early French immersion programs in that students are learning two languages together in the school setting, whereas in the early years of French immersion education, French is the only language of instruction. Di Stefano (2017) argues White students can embrace the Latino community and develop a sense of belonging and membership through the language (Spanish). Di Stefano's (2017) research supports the view that the language is a key to community membership and sense of belonging.

With the concept of community acceptance comes a great deal of study examining in-group out-group mentalities. "Monolingual communities and the elite often refer to the fluid ways with which non-dominant communities speak with terms that are stigmatized such as Spanglish or Singlish" (García & Wei, 2013, p. 41). French immersion students will undoubtedly be familiar with such terms in reference to their emerging language competency (Franglais or Fringlish). These terms highlight the departure from 'standard' language and compare their language expertise on a scale set by dominant members of society.

Emerging bilingual/multilingual identities and translinguistic histories.

This research pushes back against native/non-native speaker ideologies and encourages individuals to take ownership of their translinguistic histories. This is the place where we begin to unravel what Di Stefano (2017) referred to as "entangled connections between places and languages" (p. 168) and consider Rampton's (1990) ideas around language inheritance.

Once individuals begin a language learning journey, their paths are forever altered. Students in Di Stefano's (2017) study began to identify bilingualism (or in certain cases

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multilingualism) as an important part of their identity. These findings included individuals without claims to language inheritance. Di Stefano (2017) describes her learners as “emergent bilinguals and cultural brokers who bolster cross-cultural relations and contribute to the development of fluid and hybrid identities” (p. 170). Schwartz et al. (2011) “argued, elements such as language can become part of personal identities according to the meaning individuals attribute to them” (as cited in Di Stefano, 2017, p. 170).

If “students understand their identities proceed from their sense of belonging and language practices, they would be more inclined to consider the fundamental role belonging and language represents for all individuals. In this way, they could embrace inclusion and avoid reproducing colonizer privilege toward other minorities” (Di Stefano, 2017, p. 177).

Challenges can present themselves when bilingual idealism begins to negatively influence a language learner’s self-perception of their language expertise (Roy, 2010). Roy and Galiev’s (2011) ethnographic and sociolinguistic study revealed “French immersion students who have been learning French for several years still believe they are not ‘truly bilingual’ and that their French is not adequate” (p. 352). Existing discourses and social practices influence how the students themselves, and others, view their language competencies. Language teachers and other in-group community members can have a strong influence towards correcting these negative perceptions.

Many Canadians continue to regard bilingualism as two monolingualisms (Roy, 2010; Roy & Galiev, 2011). Roy and Galiev (2011) argue for a new language repertoire which does away with the idea of two monolingualisms and allows French immersion students to embrace alternative definitions of bilingualism. They argue for pedagogy that demonstrates understanding that language acquisition in bilinguals occurs differently from those of monolinguals, and

“place[s] emphasis on developing linguistic (and cultural) competencies” (Roy & Galiev, 2011, p. 372).

In Canadian society, the monolingual view of bilingualism dominates; bilinguals are lost between the two legitimate monolingual worlds; the third space of their transculturality is not recognized. ... French immersion students are not recognized as legitimate bilinguals because they do not conform to the definition of what it means to be bilingual in Canada. (Roy, 2010, p. 556)

Roy's (2010) research reveals how bilingualism and linguistic identities are constructed from historical, social, and political discourses, and examines the relationship between the self-perceptions of French immersion language learners in relation to these discourses. Of interest to me is this mention of the third space. A dedication to becoming bilingual impacts the L1. Many bilingual language learners go on to struggle with expressions and idioms in both languages. Bilingual language learners will suddenly find themselves facing in-group, out-group mentalities with nowhere to belong. How might language teachers, many of whom have successfully claimed this third space, empower their students to embrace their transculturality and claim their own definitions of bilingualism?

Language teacher identity.

Language teachers themselves bring their rich personal and linguistic histories to their work; each has their own sense of language expertise and language affiliation. Some French immersion language teachers lack confidence in their own language abilities. Wernicke's (2017) research examines the discursive practices taken by non-francophone French language teachers to promote a legitimate identity as French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers. The idealized native-speaker norm as the standard continues to impact FSL teachers' professional identities

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and can lead to linguistic insecurities (Wernicke, 2017). De Costa and Norton (2017) “contend that accent hierarchies, which value the native speaker (NS) over the non-native speaker (NNS), are ultimately issues of identity” (p. 8). Meanwhile, judgements are frequently passed about who “posses the ‘real’ French” between native speakers from various regions (Roy & Galiev, 2011, p. 364). Language teachers who identify as both learners and teachers of French are required to negotiate two potentially conflicting identities (Wernicke, 2017, p. 210). Although studies in applied linguistics have challenged the idea of the native-speaker for decades, it endures as the measure and standard for linguistic expertise for L2 teachers (Rampton, 1990; Wernicke, 2017). Participants in Wernicke’s (2017) study of FSL teachers from Western Canada consistently oriented to the native speaker ideology when making authenticity claims about their language abilities. These preoccupations can become problematic: “we need to be mindful not to conflate linguistic purity and naturalist notions of language acquisition with notions of linguistic competence or what it means to be a legitimate user and teacher of French” (Wernicke, 2017, p. 225). Teacher preoccupation with linguistic insecurities can detract from needed focus on the pedagogical and methodological aspects of their teaching (Wernicke, 2017).

Di Stefano’s (2017) doctoral research highlights the important role of the teacher as a model for her students when mediating identity development and culturally sustaining pedagogy practices. The findings of this (2017) study reveal that “emergent bilinguals’ identity development derives from the process built through multiple dialogic classroom instruction and practices” (p. V). Teachers effectively set language policies at the micro level (classroom); they exercise their agency and enact their professional identities in order to enhance outcomes for their students (De Costa & Norton, 2017). Teachers can often struggle with power relationships, at the micro, meso, and macro levels, which have the potential to influence educational practices

and discourses (De Costa & Norton, 2017). This thinking connects to the sociocultural theories of language learning. Finding a way forward is not easy. “Resourceful language teachers navigate complex identities in classrooms, schools, and communities, with a view to enhancing language learning and teaching” (De Costa & Norton, 2017). Some language teachers may view themselves as forces of resistance against norms established and maintained at the macro level.

Pedagogical Approaches for Oral Language Development in Immersion Classrooms

The practices of language teachers are proven to have a direct impact on the degree of language production for their learners (Dagenais, Day, & Toohey, 2006; Haj-Broussard, Olson Beal, & Boudreaux, 2017). Primary teachers and early child educators from northern communities in four Canadian provinces involved in Stagg Petersen, McIntyre, and Forsyth’s (2016) study identified a greater need for knowledge and teaching approaches to support young children’s oral language than for that of writing (for which they felt better prepared and more confident). Additionally, participants who taught First Nations, Métis and French immersion students expressed needs for professional learning about how to better support children whose home language was not the language of instruction (Stagg Petersen et al., 2016).

Studies have also examined importance of emotion in connection with cognition in L2 learning (Swain, 2013). Swain (2013) argues emotions are interpersonal, not private, and as such they, along with cognition, mediate learning. Language teachers seeking to support learners’ sense of self, and sense of language competency, cannot hold these ideas separate from relationships and emotions. Swain (2013) highlights both private speech and collaborative dialogue as important tools for languaging, through which thoughts and emotions come into expression. Haj-Broussard et al.’s (2017) study also recommends teacher prompts draw on

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student emotions, preferences, and thoughts in order to elicit meaningful expression in kindergarten French immersion students in Louisiana.

Supporting oral language production in young learners.

Oral language is often described as the foundation for literacy. It is also viewed as “crucial to belonging, being, and becoming” (Australasian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, 2009, as cited in Stagg Petersen et al., 2016, p. 11). Some practices have proven increased levels of oral language production in early L2 learners. “Teachers play a role in supporting children’s language when they interact one on one with children, but also when they foster peer interaction and help children to become conversation partners” (Stagg Petersen et al., p. 12). As children use and find their voice they become empowered; teachers can and should take purposeful action to follow research and incorporate practices which encourage sense of community, belonging, and value student thinking and expression.

Meaningful contexts for language use.

Learners should be encouraged to use the language for a variety of purposes, such as to show what they know and are thinking, to retell sequential stories, and to explain their strategies and approaches in problem solving (Stagg Petersen et al., 2016). The teacher participants in Stagg Petersen et al.’s (2016) study emphasized the importance of language use for communicative purposes, recognizing the role of the interlocutor in any form of communication. There is a need for bridging home and school cultures, especially for those who teach Indigenous and French immersion students, in order to create meaningful contexts for language use (Stagg Petersen et al., 2016). This Canadian study revealed professional learning initiatives need to focus more closely on oral language production and ways to bridge home and school cultures and languages without overly succumbing to “the Western tendency to look for concrete,

identifiable practices as signifiers of ‘culture’ [while] overlook[ing] the more durable and deeply significant underlying attitudes, meanings, memories, and values’ of culture” (Ball & Simpkins, 2004, as cited in Stagg Petersen et al., 2016, p. 15).

A sociolinguistically responsive pedagogy would allow for learners to co-create norms for social interaction both in and beyond the classroom (van Compernelle, 2010). In order to promote overall communicative competence, teachers must promote learners’ awareness of sociolinguistic features of discourse (van Compernelle, 2010; Lyter, 2016; Nadasdi, Mougeon, & Rehner, 2005). This means classroom interactions should not be “reduced to teacher-centered discourse and traditional initiation-response-feedback participation structures” (van Compernelle, 2010). Pedagogical models grounded in sociocultural and communicative approaches to language learning and teaching will promote meaningful language use. “Learner-learner communication tasks have the potential to raise learners’ awareness of the socially interactive dimensions of the language they are studying by focusing their attention on the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning” (van Compernelle, 2010, p. 451).

Use of repetition.

According to the findings of Haj-Broussard et al.’s (2017) study, the most beneficial time of day in terms of oral language production is circle time. This time offered opportunities to speak in extended phrases or sentences, and play with language using repetition. Repetition allows for L2 learners to learn new lexical items while naturally consolidating their knowledge of known ones (Haj-Broussard et al., 2017; Stagg Petersen et al., 2016). Pleasant repetition is a key component of the AIM program. Also consistent with the AIM methodology, the findings of the Haj-Broussard et al. (2017) study reveal the importance of prompting students to speak in complete sentences and setting clear expectations for target language use.

Interactional feedback.

Much attention has been given to the types of interactional feedback teachers offer their learners and their effectiveness in terms of learner uptake and repair (Lyster, 2007; Lyster, 2016; Lyster & Mori, 2006). These studies don't take into account the impact of these prompts on linguistic identities, but they do demonstrate direct results in terms of improving language expertise, which this writer feels have an impact on overall self-perceptions of language competence for L2 learners.

Sociolinguistic confidence.

A great deal of research identifies shortcomings in the domain of sociolinguistic competence among French immersion students when compared to Canadian francophones (Lyster, 2016; Nadasdi et al., 2005; Nadasdi & Vickerman, 2017). While several studies have investigated the personal pronoun use of French immersion students, this writer gives particular attention to van Compernelle's (2010) work which proposes a sociolinguistically responsive pedagogy in response to this research. Van Compernelle (2010) and others assert "personal pronouns are important features of language because they play a role in creating, defining, and maintaining social relationships and identities" (p. 446). The sociolinguistic patterns of the pronouns of address are easily understood by native speakers; however, their use can be challenging for language learners who do not have a deep understanding of the diverse social and cultural practices associated with language (van Compernelle, 2010). French language teachers should give particular attention to teaching conventions of the tu/vous address because "(1) [tu/vous] choice is a manifestation of one's social identity at the time of utterance. (2) [tu/vous] choice reflects a speaker's real or perceived relationship (e.g., intimacy or distance) with his or her interlocutor" (van Compernelle, 2010, p. 448). In addition to providing meaningful contexts

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for communication (including learner-learner interactions), van Compernelle (2010) recommends designing lessons which raise learners' awareness of tu/vous use and variation. Using a wide variety of texts within frameworks for overt instruction including transcripts of talk-in-interaction and film is also recommended for encouraging metalinguistic reflections (van Compernelle, 2010). French immersion teachers interested in supporting the identity development of their language learners and promoting sociolinguistic competence would do well to dedicate time and attention to learning connected to the use of pronouns of address.

Teaching about pronouns of address has specific implications for early primary French immersion teachers. Several teachers overuse tu (including incorrectly using tu as a plural address) and delay the introduction of vous, likely because the verb endings are easier to assimilate with the first and third person endings, resulting in an over-simplified version of the language which would be wildly inappropriate outside of the classroom (Lyster, 2016). The AIM methodology follows an approach Lyster (2016) identifies as acceptable by referring to the class as an entire group 'tout le monde' in order to use the third person singular (in order to avoid using vous). However, Lyster (2016) strongly advocates for teacher use of tu/vous with very young learners in order to prevent confusions surrounding the singular and plural address, supporting his view with reference to his earlier doctoral research on the subject. Lyster promotes a simplified contextualization of the tu/vous address pronouns which focuses on the singular/plural/formal uses of tu/vous, but does not address the more nuanced uses van Compernelle's (2010) research was abording in conjunction with identity making (Lyster's doctoral work informed van Compernelle's later work).

Shortcomings in the domain of sociolinguistic competence of immersion students are not limited to pronouns of address. Studies by Nadasdi et al. (2005) reveal French immersion

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students over-use hyper-formal variants and rarely use informal-variety, as compared to L1 Canadian francophone students, and thus call for targeted teaching of a more ‘native-like variety of French.’ To accomplish this, Nadasdi et al. (2005) recommend modifying educational input materials (the spoken French used by teachers is the primary source of oral input), adapting activities to promote output closer to native norms, and greater contact with francophones outside of the school setting. Making students aware of the use of informal variants in their L1 can help students to better understand the use of informal variants in the target language and build a concept for their appropriate use of such variants in a range of social contexts (Lyster, 2016; Nadasdi et al., 2005). Nadasdi and Vickerman’s (2017) study on the use of the lax variant /l/ by French immersion students in Toronto revealed only a small minority made any use of it at all. Nadasdi and Vickerman (2017) summarize these findings as “yet another case where the sociolinguistic competence of immersion students is markedly different than that of the Canadian francophones with whom they are compared” (p. 19). The lax variant would not be difficult to master and would contribute to a more Canadian pronunciation (Nadasdi & Vickerman, 2017).

Literacy Practices and Learner Language Identity

The research points to successful language acquisition when the language teaching is integrated with content teaching, widely denoted as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Somers, 2017; Lyster, 2016). Extensive research surrounding these outcomes demonstrates high achievement for CLIL students in the area of language acquisition while maintaining parallel levels of competence in content areas as mainstream learners (Somers, 2017). Therefore, literacy practices in strong immersion programs continue to follow the counterbalanced approach.

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While previous second language acquisition research defined learners in binary terms (e.g., motivated/unmotivated, introverted/extroverted), “contemporary identity theories offer ways to see the individual language learner situated in a larger social world” (Norton & Toohy, 2011, p. 414).

Swain’s (2013) research highlights the role of the teacher as a listener in order to strengthen connections to students and come to better understand their emotions. Ritchhart (2015) describes listening as a powerful way to show interest in and respect for another person’s thinking and feeling. Open hearted and interested listening can lift the spirits of the speaker. “By teaching emotional expression, linguistically and socioculturally, we may help our students to be able to use their L2 as tools for thinking and emoting” (Swain, 2013, p. 205-206). With these skills in place, learners will be better equipped to express themselves and to deepen their connections with others while speaking, or listening, in their L2.

Nadasdi et al. (2005) are not the only ones to recommend modifying input materials in order to promote sociocultural and linguistic learning for L2 learners; Siekmann, Parker Webster, Samson, and Moses (2017) underline the importance of the process of materials development for immersion educators, especially those teaching Indigenous languages.

The creation of appropriate materials for immersion programs is generally undertaken by immersion teachers themselves, who need sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge as well as expertise in the content areas, state mandated standards, second language acquisition and teaching and literacy development. (Siekmann et al., 2017, p. 11)

Little research depicts the creation of appropriate materials for French immersion. This is a surprising gap in the research since many teachers devote extensive amounts of time to these efforts in order to meet the linguistic needs of their learners.

Looking Forward: Strengthening Connections Between Thinking and L2 Learning in Classroom Communities

This literature review has considered the relationships between the macro, meso, and micro contexts for language learning in early French immersion. This review has revealed several areas for potential future research, many of which are beyond the scope of this writer's current work. This review did not reveal sufficient research surrounding the use of translanguaging pedagogy in French immersion contexts to lead to definitive conclusions, although this remains a topic of personal interest for further study. It is possible that a true gap exists in the research in this area due to the nature of the government mandated language requirements for early French immersion in tandem with national ideals of bilingualism as two distinct monolingualisms. This area of study is in its infancy; the keywords 'translanguaging' and 'French immersion' rarely appear in tandem in academic studies. I hope this is an area that enjoys vigorous investigation in the future as I believe it could be a possible pathway towards more culturally responsive teaching within the context of French immersion in western Canada while creating space for engaging in meaningful reconciliation.

Chapter 3: Project

Intention

Of specific interest to me moving forward are the connections between oral language production, cognition, and emotions associated with linguistic identities. My intent is to draw upon Ritchhart's (2015) work around creating cultures of thinking and explore the potential implications within the context of early French immersion classrooms aiming to capitalize on oral language production. Specifically, I am interested in approaches for capturing students' thinking as a form of ongoing assessment for learning, and as a way of validating their thoughts and contributions to classroom community, while showcasing the emerging bilingualism/multilingualism of my young learners. My project also points to ways to bring visible thinking to language classrooms. Special consideration is given to the impact of honouring student voice and promoting positive language identities in developing bilingual/multilingual speakers.

Format

This project is presented as a personal website. Here I share stories about my journey from language learner to language teacher learner. I offer reflections from my professional practice as I document my own learning. By sharing my stories here, I hope others may be encouraged and inspired. This platform lends well to autoethnographic-type entries which are grounded in my stories and personal experiences, and in conversation with research (highlighted throughout the literature review). Other professionals who might visit the sight would be able to read about (and view) practices they could implement in their own classrooms. Posts to the website are organized into three categories.

Promoting oral language production.

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As a French teacher, my heart swells when I hear my students speaking the language. I know their sense of language affiliation is strengthened through speaking. Learners entering school with no language base in French don't just magically become spontaneous speakers of French. Research consistently shows what language teachers do and how they do it has a direct impact on the language expertise of their learners.

Making language thinking visible.

Taking inspiration from the work of Harvard's Project Zero, I consider and explore the role of questioning, listening, and documenting in early French immersion classrooms. Join me as I paint my own "Pictures of Practice" and explore ways to advance learning by adapting thinking routines for the kindergarten French language classroom (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011).

Language identity.

Sense of identity is constantly evolving; linguistic identities are no exception. Due to the sociocultural nature of language acquisition, relationships and sense of belonging are critical elements to consider for language teachers. Join me as I explore culturally sustaining educational practices and strive to nurture linguistic identities.

To view the website, follow the link below:

www.mmeanderson.com

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