
University of Ottawa French immersion students’ linguistic identities: The duality of their positionings*

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Abstract

An important yet still relatively under-researched area in immersion studies includes post-secondary immersion research, which is increasingly warranted in order to better understand the student experience. The participants in this case study find themselves in a pivotal life moment as they transition from the K-12 immersion education system to a bilingual post-secondary institution. The study examines how the Régime d’immersion en français (RIF) students at the University of Ottawa position themselves and are positioned towards Francophone language and culture during this transition. This study reports on the experiences of three first-year undergraduate RIF students with respect to their linguistic identities. Do they consider themselves Bilingual, Multilingual, Francophone, Francophile, Anglophone, or Other? Moreover, do their Francophone peers legitimize or challenge these self-ascribed positionings? The study exposes factors which have influenced the linguistic positioning of the participants and comments on patterns in factors which have affected their linguistic identity in particular.

Key words: French immersion, positioning, linguistic identity, post-secondary language learning, higher education

Résumé

Un domaine de recherche important mais encore relativement sous-étudié concerne l’immersion universitaire. Plus encore, peu d’études portent sur les expériences des étudiants en immersion universitaire. Les participants de cette étude de cas se trouvent à une période critique de leur vie, alors

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qu'ils passent du système d'enseignement en immersion de la maternelle à la 12e année à un établissement d'enseignement postsecondaire bilingue. L'étude examine la manière dont les étudiants du Régime d'immersion en français (RIF) de l'Université d'Ottawa se positionnent et sont positionnés par rapport à la langue et la culture francophones. Cette étude se concentre sur les expériences d'apprentissage de trois étudiantes de première année du premier cycle du Régime d'immersion en français avec un accent particulier sur leur identité linguistique durant cette transition. Se considèrent-elles comme bilingues, multilingues, francophones, francophiles, anglophones ou autres ? De plus, leurs pairs francophones légitiment-ils ou contestent-ils ces positionnements autoproclamés ? L'étude expose les facteurs qui ont influencé le positionnement linguistique des participantes et explore les aspects de ces facteurs qui ont particulièrement marqué leurs identités linguistiques.

Mots-clés : immersion française, positionnement, identité linguistique, apprentissage des langues au niveau postsecondaire, enseignement supérieur

Introduction

Within a Canadian context, in Ontario, many K-12 Anglophone students, registered in English-language schools, spend a great deal of time learning French as a second language (FSL) in an immersion context. For example, in the 2012–2013 school year, 2,031,195 students were enrolled in an FSL program (CPF, 2013). Although various FSL learning models exist, such as Core French, Intensive French, and Immersion (Dicks & Kristmanson, 2008), Ontario parents can enroll their children in immersion as early as kindergarten (Early immersion, EI) and students can remain enrolled until the completion of secondary school (Dicks & Kristmanson, 2008). However, as outlined in the literature review below, little is known about what happens to French immersion (FI) students after graduation from secondary school. As Howard (2007) argued, one of the main concerns among these students is their belief that their own lack of second-language proficiency limits their abilities to communicate with members of Francophone communities. This perception stems from the sense that even after numerous years of instruction, French immersion students do not believe they are part of either dominant Canadian linguistic group (French or English) (Roy, 2010). Since they have studied the majority of time in French, they are not quite like their Anglophone peers in that they have had a different educational experience. However, they are not perceived as Francophones either (Roy, 2010). Consequently, they are not identified and positioned as bilinguals by and in Canadian society because they do not speak like native French speakers and are often compared to them (Auger, Dalley, & Roy, 2007; Grosjean, 2008; Roy, 2010). In an officially bilingual country (and multilingual

society), French immersion students find themselves stuck in the middle of the bilingualism debate (Duff, 2007).

Context

The French immersion approach was founded in Montreal in the 1960s. The program has been acclaimed for its innovative approach, teaching FSL through content-based classes (Howard, 2007). Since the 1960s, many Canadian elementary and secondary schools have adopted the program. Yet, only a handful of Canadian universities have done so for post-secondary studies (e.g., University of Ottawa; Weinberg, Burger, & Boukacem, 2012). In a post-secondary context, French immersion streams allow students to pursue the study of their major (e.g., Biology), while continuing their FSL studies. The reason for the lack of FI programs in the post-secondary education (PSE) context is described by Weinberg, Burger, and Boukacem (2012) as simply being unpopular.

A main concern among French immersion students upon completion of their secondary school studies is a shared belief and feeling that they are limited in their ability to communicate with francophone communities (Howard, 2007) outside a classroom context. It has been widely discussed that French immersion students are finding themselves in the midst of a language identity crisis, unable to find a place in either of the dominant monolingual groups (Roy, 2010).

To date, research in French immersion has focused “mainly on primary and high school programs” (Weinberg & Burger, 2010, p. 114). Previous research focused in Canadian FI programming included, but were not limited to:

variations of delivery of immersion programs; the educational stage at which students begin the immersion program — early, middle, late or post-secondary level; the type of language — second, foreign, or heritage language; and the amount of instruction given in the first language compared with the amount given in the second language. (p. 114)

Due to the recent advent of these post-secondary FI programs, it is not surprising that these French immersion programs as a whole have been significantly less documented than in elementary and secondary school contexts.

The research question

This case study was guided by the following research question: How do French Immersion students who have graduated from a secondary school French immersion program in Ontario position themselves vis-à-vis Francophone language and culture during their first year of undergraduate enrollment in the University of Ottawa’s French immersion program?

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this case study with narrative trends was to describe the positionings (Davies & Harré, 1990) of first-year, post-secondary French immersion students at Canada's largest bilingual university. It examined the issues related to linguistic identity through an inquiry into the experiences of three recent Ontario secondary school graduates who chose to continue their FSL acquisition by pursuing undergraduate post-secondary education in the *Régime d'immersion en français* (RIF) program at the University of Ottawa. Specifically, in order to gain a deeper understanding of their individual experiences, each participant was interviewed three times, using Seidman's (2013) three interview model. This study illustrates the linguistic identity construction and struggle of these students by clarifying how they positioned themselves and were positioned vis-à-vis Francophone language and culture. It explores the factors that have influenced their positioning as well as patterns in the factors that have affected their linguistic identity in particular.

Literature review

Only a handful of Canadian universities have adapted a French immersion program for post-secondary studies (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2013; Séror & Weinberg, 2013). Séror and Weinberg (2012) explain that it has only been since the early 2000s that Canadian students have been given the option to continue to study FSL in an FI program at the post-secondary level. This lack of opportunities to further study FSL could be one of the reasons why some FI students report a decline in their "bilingualism". The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL) published a report called "Two languages, a world of opportunities: Second language learning in Canada's universities" (OCOL, 2009). In its report, the Commission examined the state of second language learning programs in Canada while devoting particular attention to FI programs at the post-secondary level. The Commission noted "opportunities for intensive second-language study are limited — for example, to enrol in immersion programs" (p. III). The report specified that the FI program was only offered at 17 of the 84 post-secondary Canadian institutions (p. 8). The report further noted that the program was offered in "10 English-language institutions, including one in Quebec; two bilingual institutions; and five French-language institutions, including three in Quebec" (p. 8). However, according to the report, the data did not provide details about the extent or depth of the FI programs in these institutions.

As explained further by CPF, prior to the 2000s, many Canadian universities offered only FSL, specifically using class time to teach the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (CPF, 2006). As noted above,

17 Canadian universities offer a FI program such as the University of Ottawa, York University's Glendon College, Campus Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta, Université Ste-Anne, and Simon Fraser University. In a post-secondary context, a FI program, in contrast to FSL classes, allows students to pursue the study of their major (e.g., Biology) while continuing their FSL studies. Séror and Weinberg (2013) explain that "in this context [post-secondary FI studies], students can combine the pursuit of advanced literacy and disciplinary skills in a second language. These skills lay the ground work for their entry in the work force and society" (p. 124). Ultimately, the aim of immersion studies at the post-secondary level is clearly described by Wesche (cited in Séror and Weinberg, 2012):

University immersion aims at the concurrent learning of disciplinary content and related L2 [second language] development, with a language curriculum determined by the language issues raised in the discipline course. Ongoing language development is assumed as learners focus on understanding the meanings conveyed by instructors through their L2. (p. 137)

Specifically, as the enrollment for the French immersion program at the University of Ottawa increases, it has become apparent that the identity construction of these French immersion students is not being sufficiently documented (Ambrosio, Dansereau, & Gobeil, 2012; Séror & Weinberg, 2012). Research to date has focused on the success of the FI program but much less on the identity struggles and transformations experienced by students in these programs (Ambrosio, et al., 2012; Burger, Weinberg, & Wesche, 2013; Knoerr, 2010; Knoerr & Weinberg, 2013; Lamoureux, 2013; Schafer, 2013).

This has occurred for two main reasons. First, as noted above, only a handful of universities offer a French immersion program, and only since the early 2000s. For this reason alone, it has been particularly challenging to investigate the linguistic identity of FI students, given the lack of opportunities to do so (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2013). Second, the transition of FI students to post-secondary studies is rather diverse; not all students who graduate from an FI program in secondary school choose to continue FSL studies in an FI program or enrol in FSL courses at the post-secondary level. In turn, this limits the opportunities where the continuation of the identity struggle can be observed and investigated.

Overview of post-secondary FI research

It is essential to survey previous FI research in a post-secondary context in order to best describe the current existing literature gap: a lack of research that investigates FI's linguistic identity. Both Lamoureux (2013) and Schafer (2013) have contributed substantial revelations about FI research in this post-secondary context.

Lamoureux (2013) conducted a study on student experience in the FI program at the University of Ottawa with a specific focus on student transition, in which she explored notions of linguistic identity or agency. Her findings show that FI student transitions to the University of Ottawa were most often expressed through language insecurities while speaking. Students noted that they felt uncomfortable speaking in front of large groups in French (p. 116). Furthermore, Lamoureux noted that “despite students’ presence at a bilingual university and participating in francophone classes (personal translation)” (p. 116; author’s translation), students said they did not “know any real Francophones” (p. 116; author’s translation). Ultimately, student transitions were characterized by the participants’ identities as “good students” (p. 116; author’s translation). Lamoureux explains that the participants of her study felt conflicted by their new realities, studying alongside Francophones and not just their FI peers. Lamoureux concludes that student transition in the FI program at the University of Ottawa remains one of the most striking themes.

Schafer (2013) also explored FI in a post-secondary school context. In his master’s thesis, he examined Alberta high school students’ perception of using French after graduation. His study revealed several important findings. First, he noted that his participants had “limited experience in speaking French outside of school” (p. 35) and observed that “most students are unaware of where they can go to use their French in the city and surrounding region” (p. 38). In turn, these two results show that a decontextualized knowledge of French may limit its actual use outside the classroom. In addition, his study also revealed that “most are unsure if they will continue using their French after high school” (p. 40). These results echo the concerns of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (2009) and Friesen (2013). In the end, Schafer recommended that FI students need to be prepared to use French outside the classroom. A participant from the report “Two Languages” (2009) commented on this very reality:

The best way to learn a second language is to study in it . . . When you study a subject in your second language, you have to do it at a more profound and intimate intellectual level . . . Learning how to say ‘I saw a dog’ in your second language just isn’t enough! (p. 12)

FI students must not only be willing to interact with Francophones outside the classroom but also be better informed about opportunities for such discourse and interactions (Schafer, 2013). Both the studies surveyed above are samples of significant research that has already been completed in the field of FI post-secondary research. However, it is evident that the conceptualization of FI student’s linguistic identity has yet to be explored in full (Séror & Weinberg 2012). Previous research in this field is limited, with the exception

of Dagenais, Day, and Toohey, 2006; Makropoulos, 2005; Marshall & Laghzaoui, 2012; Roy & Galiev, 2011; Séror & Weinberg, 2012. This study responds to that gap in the literature.

Research site: The University of Ottawa

In order to better understand the nuances of the study, it is important to contextualize the research site. The University of Ottawa was chosen for several reasons. First, since the province of Ontario has the largest population of Francophones outside of Québec (King, 1998), it was important to choose a university that would honour this fact and that also had a mandate to serve the Francophone community. The University of Ottawa does in fact have such a mandate and it has the most extensive and oldest French first-language program outside Québec (Beillard, 2000). The University's 1965 Act, 'Loi de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1965', states that it aims "to further bilingualism and biculturalism and to preserve and develop French culture in Ontario" (Section 4(c)). In addition to its mandate, the University of Ottawa has also upheld this commitment in its strategic plan called *Destination 2020* (University of Ottawa, 2013). The strategic plan puts forth several goals it would like the university to achieve by the year 2020. One of the founding values includes "promoting bilingualism and Francophone communities" (p. 2). The University of Ottawa continues to hold bilingualism as one of its main values, within which it has also conceived a specific aim, namely "Goal 3: Francophonie and bilingualism: A competitive advantage that is central to our mission" (p. 7). The goal focuses on increasing Francophone populations studying at the university and also aims to "raise the number of registrations in [our] French immersion programs to 3,500 (or 10% of our current undergraduate student population)" (p. 7). It is considerably important that this institution is favouring an environment for second language education, specifically a French immersion program. Because this is true, the University of Ottawa was deemed to be the best possible site for this research study. It is important to note that, while the University of Ottawa values bilingualism, it is unclear whether this is framed as an identity or something else. Initially in 1848, the focus of bilingualism was characterized as an individual ability or competency (Beillard, 2000). However, by 1974, bilingualism was framed as being institutional, as in the capacity to serve students and allow them to study in either language (Beillard, 2000). Today, it remains unclear how *Destination 2020* frames bilingualism, much less how it relates to linguistic identity.

Presently, any undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa can choose to study in either French or English or both. In fact, students do not need to be in the immersion program in order to take classes in either official language. Except for few programs of studies (e.g., the B.A. in Second Language Teach-

ing), students are able to submit written assignments in either official language, regardless of the language of instruction of the course — with the exception of language courses, where students must submit course work in the language being studied. However, the RIF is available to most students who do not speak French as their first language and regardless of how many years of previous French instruction they have received. It is important to note, however, that not everyone is eligible for the RIF. For instance, graduates from an Anglophone secondary school can apply and register for the RIF but graduates from a Francophone secondary school cannot. The student experience at the University of Ottawa is significantly different than other PSE FI program (University of Ottawa, 2014). FI students are no longer segregated, unlike typical K-12 immersion programs. FI students at the University of Ottawa take content classes with Francophone peers (University of Ottawa, 2014). Therefore, in the RIF, students must take classes intended and designed for French as a first language (FFL) students, as well as FSL classes (University of Ottawa, 2014). Nonetheless, FI students at the University of Ottawa are studying a minority language alongside Francophones who themselves are also minorities within the University of Ottawa. For this reason, it is plausible to say that FI students are a minority within a minority group.

Overview of the RIF

Currently, the RIF is available in 60 programs in the Humanities and 26 programs in the Sciences under the umbrella program called “Extended French” (University of Ottawa, 2014). For example, in order to enter the RIF in a Humanities program, a student must successfully complete the admissions test to the program. Then, the student is required to complete a minimum of 42 credits in French in addition to their regular program expectations, though the credits in French may be the courses required for their program. Furthermore, at the end of the program, FI students must also pass FLS 3500, a course that assesses the student’s competencies in French (University of Ottawa, 2014). In order to obtain the RIF in a Sciences or Engineering program, the requirements differ in the way the 42 credits should be completed in French.

FI students are also able to convert up to eight grades into qualitative marks (pass/fail), over the first two years of their program of study. This strategy helps encourage more students to try the RIF (University of Ottawa, 2014). Furthermore, it does not penalize a student’s annual grade point average while they continue to study FSL. In fact, this qualitative grade system helps students maintain high averages and allows students to continue to be eligible for RIF scholarships, another attractive feature of the program. Scholarships, often described as a study “incentive” for the program, allow students to receive \$1,000 and are given “to all full-time FIS students who are taking at least 2

courses in French per term” (Burger, Weinberg, & Wesche, 2013, p. 32). Also, it is important to note that the Faculties of Sciences and of Engineering cannot receive qualitative grades (their programs fall under the umbrella program of “Extended French”). In addition to these requirements, the RIF also includes accompanying language courses (FSL 2581, FLS 3581), which are offered to students based on their entrance exam results. These courses help further language skills needed to be successful in French at the University of Ottawa. These courses are not mandatory but recommended. The additional advantage of taking these courses is that they are worth three credits each, despite the fact they are only 90 minutes each week, compared to the typical three-credit courses, which comprise three hours of instruction per week. The aims for these accommodations are to allow students to balance the requirements of both their academic and language programs while obtaining access to support.

Certain measures are already in place to ensure that RIF students live a bilingual experience on campus. For example, students are given a purple bracelet at the beginning of the academic year, which serves as a visual signal to help RIF students find one another in classes where they are mixed with Francophones. The Immersion Club and other social organizations also help plan outings and activities for RIF students as they continue to develop their skills in French.

Methodology

In order to investigate the research question, a blended qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013), which is a case study with narrative trends, was designed. The qualitative research paradigm was chosen because it is founded on the principle that research is established on “assumptions about interpretation and human actions” (Clandinin, 2007, p. 4). In addition, qualitative research seeks to understand the participants of a study rather than predict or control the findings (Clandinin, 2007). These principles are important for the study as it allows the researcher to have a holistic view of the participant without predicting the outcomes of the study.

In December 2013, a pilot study (Durepos, 2013), using the case study approach (Creswell 2009, 2013; Duff, 2007), identified the University of Ottawa as “a real-life, contemporary bounded system” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The case study approach was also used because it requires the researcher to identify the “intent of conducting the case study” (p.98), where, as Creswell explains, “intent” can be the need “to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern” with the aim to “best understand the problem” (p. 98). Here, the intent is to better understand how FI students construct their linguistic identity via the use of the positioning theory and other concepts. “Instrumental case” was favoured since the study sought to investigate the linguistic identity construction of first-

year undergraduate FI students during the 2014–2015 academic year. As well, the case study approach was an important aspect of the design as it takes into account that, if the same research study were conducted at a different site (i.e., another post-secondary institution offering FI programs), the results would not necessarily be the same. It also accounts for the fact that positionings may be shaped differently at other post-secondary institutions since the University of Ottawa is one of the only institutions that integrates FI students alongside Francophone students in content classrooms. Given this important detail, it is reasonable to say that the need to select a site and the importance of intent in the instance of this study, as prescribed by the case study method, help shed light on these important nuances at the University of Ottawa site, in ways that other research methods may not.

In addition to the case study approach, it was determined that the narrative approach (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Huber, 2010) would be used, as it allows the researcher to explore the various lived experiences (Clandinin, 2007) of the participants, permitting a “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20; cited in Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Recently, narratives in language and identity studies have gained greater popularity since they provide researchers more opportunities to further understand L2 learning and identity construction as progressively noteworthy social processes (Duff, 2008; Norton, 2000) and have become the preferred research method in identity research (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Thus, knowledge of their positionings was co-constructed with the participants, creating a space to share “multiple narratives” (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014).

Students from all disciplines, genders, and ethnicities were encouraged to participate. After receiving ethics approval for the study, the director of the RIF program emailed a recruitment letter inviting all 573 first-year of University of Ottawa students from various majors and enrolled in the RIF program to complete an on-line questionnaire, which contained open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The questionnaire format was chosen as a recruitment tool in order to encourage as many participants as possible to respond and thus narrow down the selections based on pre-established criterion. The design of this tool was based on the pilot study mentioned in Durepos (2013).

As well, Seidmann’s (2013) three-interview approach was used. Seidmann’s model allowed the study to strategically address different issues at different times (interviews). It is a well-planned out approach that ensures credibility is established as all possible data are gathered and nothing is overlooked because it requires the researcher to thoughtfully and purposefully structure each interview with a planned objective.

The first interview aimed at getting to know the student and establishing a relationship. General questions were asked as a follow-up to the on-line background questionnaire. At this time, the participant was also asked to sign a consent form. The questions were relatively broad, such as “Tell me about your experience of learning French as second language through the immersion programs (elementary, High school, and now post-secondary).”

The second interview asked more precise questions that aimed to answer the research question. Indeed, these questions were the heart of the data as they focused on the various narratives of each participant.

The third interview was a follow-up interview in which the transcripts were verified with the participants. As well, the third interview ensured that the knowledge was being co-constructed by both the interviewee and interviewer. It also ensured that the stories were accurate and did not compromise the participants’ identity because the aim of the study was to share the experiences of the participant and express their views. This final interview provided an opportunity to ask further questions based on what had been said in the first and second interviews.

Results and findings

Participant 1

She was a first-year undergraduate student majoring in Human Rights and Conflict Studies, at the Faculty of Social Sciences. She was from London, Ontario, where she completed secondary school having been enrolled in French immersion since junior kindergarten. She described her linguistic identity as Bilingual (French and English). In addition, she explained that her mother tongue was English and that she spoke this language with her family. At the time of the online questionnaire, she had completed two courses in French since enrollment in her program in September 2014. She chose to continue her FSL studies via the RIF because she hoped to obtain one of the program’s scholarships. In addition, she aspired to pursue a bilingual career and wanted to work for the Federal Government. It was also important for her to become fully bilingual and to improve her communication skills in French because of her future career goals. She desired to either become a lawyer or work for the Canadian Federal Government after she graduated.

Participant 2

She was a first-year undergraduate student majoring in Political Science, at the Faculty of Social Sciences. She was from Toronto, where she completed secondary school, having also been enrolled in immersion since junior kindergarten. However, unlike Participant 1, she described her linguistic identity as

Anglophone. In addition, she explained that she could speak English, French, and Russian fluently. Her mother tongues were English and Russian, two languages spoken in her childhood home. At the time of the questionnaire, she had completed six courses in French since her September 2014 enrollment. She too wanted to become a lawyer someday and believed that French would help her achieve her goals because she believed the programs at the University of Ottawa for Law were only offered in French. At the time of the interviews, she had been recently accepted into the Civil Law program. She chose to continue her FSL studies via the RIF because she wanted to pursue a bilingual career and hoped to work for the Federal Government (See question #16 of questionnaire for sample of the question.)

Participant 3

She was a first-year undergraduate student also majoring in Human Rights and Conflict Studies, at the Faculty of Social Sciences. She was from Ottawa, where she completed secondary school, having been enrolled in immersion since junior kindergarten—with the exception of two years in Core French, between Grades 1 and 3, since her school did not offer immersion for those grades at that time. She described her linguistic identity as Francophile. She shared how her ethnic background as a Malaysian was very important to her. Although her father speaks Hakka and her mother speaks Bidayuh, she does not. In addition, she explained that her mother tongue is English and speaks this language with her family. At the time of the questionnaire, she had completed five courses in French since her enrollment in September 2014. She chose to continue her FSL studies via the RIF because of the “generous” scholarships awarded in the program. She hoped to pursue a bilingual career and her overall attitude towards FSL learning was “Why not?” It was equally important for her to become fully bilingual and to improve communication skills in French (question #16 of questionnaire). She too had the goal of becoming a lawyer.

How are positionings chosen?

In this study, FI students position themselves towards Francophone language and culture via two methods: their own subjective positionings (reflexive) and those of the target language group (interactive), as noted in the positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Miller, 2009).

Subjective positionings

First, subjective positionings are established by researchers’ interpretations of FI students’ experiences, based on the following themes or factors: *Capital*, *Culture*, and *Identity*. According to the experiences and narratives of the participants interviewed, these three themes helped describe subjective positioning

and therefore showcased what type or types of linguistic identity the participants self-ascribed to.

The theme of Capital affected the positionings of the participants, often revealing why and how French was deemed to be useful for students' immediate and long-term future. Two types of Capital reoccurred: the most cultural and symbolic capital, Symbolic Capital, as interpreted by the researcher, helped conceptualize that the participants were goal-oriented about their future jobs and the potential that knowing and speaking French would help them achieve their career goals (e.g., becoming lawyers or public servants). In turn, Symbolic Capital will eventually manifest itself as Economic Capital. Cultural or Linguistic Capital also informed this study on how participants perceived acquired skill levels in French. It revealed how the participants not only conceptualized culture but also their personal cultural appreciations, identifications, and knowledge. Most strikingly, although the participants of this study reported that they believe knowing and learning French is important, all three participants noted that they did not necessarily identify with Francophone culture. For example:

I think it's more like a personal, I see myself a bilingual rather as I don't know, like being connected to a culture everywhere, in the city and like in Canada because I don't know that much about French culture. Like, I know what I've been taught in school and stuff, but I read occasionally, but it's more like for me personally like I know I can speak French and English so I see myself as bilingual, but I feel like I'm not as into like French culture as I could be. (Participant 1, Interview 2, 00:41–01:18)

The use of Capital in linguistic identity studies in an immersion context is not a new one. Indeed, Makropoulos (2005), Marshall & Laghzaoui (2012) and Séror & Weinberg (2012) report findings with themes of Capital in its various forms. As in this study, Capital helps reveal more information on how linguistic identity is shaped. Marshall & Laghzaoui (2012) reported that Linguistic Capital was considered important for their participants and any such capital gained during elementary and secondary school should not be lost or wasted. For example, Makropoulos (2005) focused on Cultural Capital, where the three participants of the study expressed opinions about their linguistic identity. One of his participants, Romeo, "believes that immersion learners can adopt the Francophone identity if they master French and interact with native speakers. While Romeo aspires to become Francophone, he currently feels that his lack of proficiency in French prevents him from legitimately crossing into this space" (p. 1454). Likewise, Séror & Weinberg (2012) also use Cultural Capital to interpret how their respondents frame their linguistic identity, which they note as being one of bilingualism tied to Canadian pride. Although these studies and this current study share similar findings, the way Capital, particu-

larly Cultural and Symbolic Capital is interpreted in this study is different. It helps inform subjective positioning, as described above.

Next, the theme of Identity also had an impact on subjective positionings, as it revealed that identifying with the target language makes it easier to speak it and learn it. For example, Participant 1 said: "If you can identify with the language you're speaking, it will make it easier to actually use it that often" (Interview 3, 11:31). In the narratives of the participants, it was also revealed that identity as a whole is not stagnant but constantly being defined and redefined, based on experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Because this study explores linguistic identity via positioning theory, it is able to display how positionings change from one moment in time to another and to discuss these changes with the participant. Shifts in positionings were evident in the findings. All of the participants reported a subjective positioning at the beginning of the study that was not necessarily the same as what they reported at the end. In addition, this suggests that, when speaking about linguistic identity through the lens of positioning, it is simply a snapshot of a larger and ongoing process.

Instances of subjective positionings were noted twice during the study, once at the online questionnaire stage (Question # 25) and once towards the end of interviews. In the case of Participant 1, she subjectively positioned herself as Bilingual (French and English) on her questionnaire response and reported the same subjective positioning at the end of the interviews. She stated: "I think mostly bilingual, but probably leaning more towards like English-speaking" (Interview 2, 17:54) while adding that she hopes to become "super bilingual" at the end of her university studies. Participant 2 subjectively positioned herself as an Anglophone at the start of the study and then subjectively positioned herself as a Trilingual (Multilingual) by the end of the study. She said:

I speak three languages and I would tell them that I'm equally, you know, English-speaking as I am Russian-speaking as I am French-speaking because it's under different contexts and circumstances and environments that I use different languages. So, I wouldn't even say Anglophone or bilingual. So, I think it's a combination of all three. I'd say trilingual. (Interview 2, 05:45)

And finally, Participant 3 initially subjectively positioned herself as a Francophile and then Anglophone becoming a Francophile. She said:

[It's] just hard because like, when you're in the university environment, they're always like, oh, if you're learning French, you're a Francophile. That's what [they-Francophones] always call you. But I mean, I feel like I'm an Anglophone, but it's like I'm learning French. I would say that I'm like an Anglophone becoming a Francophile. (Interview 2, 34:55)

In between these two moments of different linguistic identities, the research has theorized how each participant experienced a different kind of po-

sitioning: interactive positioning. Therefore, what types of linguistic identities did participants ascribe to at the beginning of the study in comparison to those they chose once they were in the middle of the study? As noted in Table 1, a shift in positionings can be observed. This is attributed to interactive positioning reported by the participants and accounted for by positioning theory (Davie & Harré, 1990).

TABLE 1

Participants' subjective and interactive positionings reported throughout the study

	Subjective positioning	Interactive positioning	Subjective positioning
Participant	On-line questionnaire (March 2015)	Beginning of interviews (Early April 2015)	End of interviews (Mid-late April 2015)
#1	Bilingual (French and English)	Bilingual and/or Anglophone	Bilingual (more English than French)
#2	Anglophone	Bilingual (French and English)*	Trilingual (Multilingual)
#3	Francophile	Anglophone	Anglophone becoming a Francophile

*Before enrolling at University of Ottawa

The findings are most often interconnected because they each individually play a role on positionings but cannot always be discussed in isolation. However, when looking at these three themes together, they help better understand the subjective positionings chosen by the participants at different moments in time. Based on the information theorized by the study from the theoretical notions of Capital, Culture, and Identity, it is possible to show that participants self-ascribe their own linguistic identity.

Interactive positioning

Positionings by others or interactive positionings in this study was associated to two factors: the theme of Acceptance and reported spoken discourse by the participants. As noted in Table 1, a shift in positionings occurred in the middle of the study. During the interviews, participants were able to share their experience in the RIF and discuss moments where interactive positioning impacted their linguistic identity. They were able to report instances where they were

either intentionally or unintentionally positioned by others through interactive positioning. The shifts in linguistic identity in the middle of the study (see Table 1) were attributed either to how Francophone peers had positioned them (intentionally or not) or the participants' perception of how they were or were not accepted. Again, this reinforces what Roy and Galiev (2011) reported in their study — that perceptions of FI students have an impact on their linguistic identity.

The theme of Acceptance and the sub-theme of Legitimization help explain positionings because FI students most often used the native speakers as a barometer (Block, 2007; Roy, 2010). As shown in the excerpts, Participants 1, 2, and 3 were concerned about being accepted by Francophones, and also reported more experiences of *legitimization by others*. In this case, this desire to have francophone peers and other Francophones outside of the University accept them as legitimate speakers of French impacted their linguistic identity via interactive positioning.

In the cases where the participants reported feeling unaccepted or not legitimized, they also reported experiences of interactive positioning; not necessarily considered a negative experience, it can also be a positive one. Participants reported both positive and negative interactions with Francophones:

- For example, Participant 1's positive instance of legitimization by others occurred when she was able to have a conversation about a quiz with a Francophone peer without feeling uncomfortable: "In class, like when I have a conversation with someone or when I like talk to the teacher in French, it's validating that I can speak French and be understood. I'm more connected I guess" (Interview 2, 15:45). On the other hand, a negative interaction happened while visiting Québec City during a school trip: although she spoke to a store clerk in French, he responded to her in English. Here is what she thought about the experience: "[I felt] kind of annoyed. Because it's a simple conversation just like I'm buying this or I want to order this. So, I felt like there wasn't any reason for them to reply in English" (26:17.9).
- In regards to Participant 2, a positive experience was when she obtained a higher grade than her Francophone peer. She said: "He was so surprised because he was he's top of the class. He was super smart and cocky and then I remember, he even asked me to read my mid-term. And, I'm like, 'yeah, sure read it' " (Interview 1, 23:37).
- Participant 3 also shared an experience of positive and negative interactions, which impacted her legitimization by others. First, she explained that, while visiting Montreal, she was told that she spoke French well. She said:

We went to the restaurants and [said] we're from Ottawa and we're in French immersion. And they were like, 'oh wow, it's great', and then they'd talk to us in French and they'd be like, it's great that you're learning French. Your French is really great. (Interview 1, 24:46)

Participant 3 certainly felt encouraged. However, she shared a negative interaction when visiting Quebec City. She was walking during the Winter Carnival festival when a man walked up to her and said 'Ni hao' ['hello' in Mandarin]. This was her reaction:

I was like, oh, do other people assume that I'm like Chinese or that I seem Mandarin, or Cantonese, or something. Even though, I could speak with them fluently in French. People see, like my race for example, or ethnicity. What do other people think? Um, do they think that I can speak French at all or do they assume that I can't? (Interview 2, 22:40–24:09)

Participant 3, in this case, relied on others for legitimization but had a negative interaction. In this case, she was interactively positioned by her ethnicity, which in turn made her question her own legitimization as a French speaker.

All three participants reported instances of legitimization by others, as observed via the theme of Acceptance. Because of these interactions, either negative or positive, of acceptance and legitimization, their own linguistic identity had been affected. Furthermore, it helps explain the shift in their linguistic identity.

- Participant 1 said:

I know when I hear people that are French speaking English and I can tell [that they are Francophone], I don't ever consider them not bilingual. I'm almost like 'well they can speak both languages', but I don't know about everyone ... so it's kind of always there [concern], I don't know. Do people consider me bilingual? Do they think I can actually speak French? (Interview 2, 20:41)

In her case, the interactive positioning was her own interpretation of how others, such as Francophones, positioned her. In fact, she was aware of this type of positioning, as she then said, "It never really like effects [sic] anything because I just sit in class and listen and contribute if I want to, but the thought is always there: are people going to judge me?" (Interview 2, 1:05). In this case, Participant 1 is reporting linguistic insecurity. She states that it does not arise as she sits in class and participates if she wants to, although, she does not report the possibility of interactive positioning from those around her and she is aware of it.

- Participant 2 was the most vocal about interactive positioning, reporting several moments of interactive positioning. For example: “I’m in a group with two French people, they’re talking to each other in French, and they turn to me automatically in English. So for them, I’m not fully integrated into their French” (Interview 2, 13:25). She also said:

Everybody here calls me Anglophone. Everywhere I go, all my French courses; all of my French friends, they are all automatically putting me into that category and I guess when people place you in a category you start to believe yourself that’s what you are. Before, I didn’t think so. Before, I thought of myself as a bilingual student who, you know, who did English, who did French. (Interview 2, 04:08)

Not only was she aware of interactive positioning, she was, just like Participant 1, also aware of her personal perceptions of interactive positioning:

Even though English is my dominant language and I speak it better and I like to use it more, I don’t know, they [Francophones] just automatically assume that I’m one of those Anglophones. You know, like one of those English-speaking people that just came here and don’t really care about the French culture, the French people, which is not true. (Interview 2, 5:00)

- In the case of Participant 3, she explained that she was told and interactively positioned because if you are “learning French, you’re a Francophile” (Interview 1, 34:45). For this reason, she felt interactively positioned as such. However, when asked about her linguistic identity at the mid study point, she said: “Because I have spoken English at home, I identify more with like, and click as an Anglophone first” (Interview 2, 35:23).

Therefore, because the state of the participants’ acceptance by others influenced the FI students’ own opinion of their linguistic identity, these negative and positive interactions propelled shifts in their linguistic identity. Both interactions, one positive and one negative, impacted participants’ positionings, suggesting that it is these types of exchanges that help FI students validate their ability and competence in French and thus their positioning with regards to the target language community. This study agrees with Roy and Galiev (2011) that FI students do seek acceptance from Francophones because it shows how both types of positioning, subjective and interactive, can shape linguistic identity from one moment to the next. A reason for this could be that the evident goal of learning a second language is to not only use among fellow learners but to use the L2 to communicate with a larger body of speakers. Although seeking

acceptance from Francophones can at times be problematic, it is only natural that FI students do so as they hope to be able to interact with a variety of French-speaking populations.

However, positioning is not always “cut and dried”, as noted in the findings, most often when observing positionings. They are a complex web of interactions in which students do not always realize why they position themselves the way they do. In fact, it is not always possible to separate the two, as seen in the case of Participants 2 and 3. Their initial subjective positioning reported in the questionnaire were actually informed by previous interactive positionings prior to the study. For example, Participant 2 said the reason why she subjectively positioned herself as “Anglophone” on her survey “because everybody here calls me Anglophone” (Interview 2, 03:45). Similarly, Participant 3 said “learning French, you’re a Francophile” (Interview 1, 34:45). It is not always possible or reasonable to discuss one without the other; one helps inform the other.

Conclusions

Overall impressions

This study has shown that not only is linguistic identity fluid and complex but it also changes, based on positioning. Furthermore, it has also shed light on the difficulties participants face when using certain positionings, such as bilingual, since these very positions can be challenged, either by the student or by others around them. This raises the concern that current FI programming in the PSE context does not account for these shifts and the reasons they occur. In fact, as recommended by Roy (2008) in the middle school context, current FI programming and curriculum needs to:

rethink bilingualism and multilingualism in Canada. Much research has focused on evaluating the competences of French immersion students against those of Francophones. How can we evaluate French immersion students on the basis of who they are and what they can bring to our Canadian society as bilinguals and multilinguals? (p. 404)

It appears this is also true for the PSE context. Because identities are fluid and constantly changing, there needs to be a larger discussion about how these very linguistic identities can be used in a post-secondary French immersion education for the betterment of the students instead of simply focusing on language competency.

In addition, Johnson & Swain (1997) pointed out 20 years earlier that FI students do not tend to consider membership in the target language community: “. . . in many immersion programs . . . [s]tudents (and their parents) see advantages—social, academic, or economic—in a high level of bilingual-

ism, but their sense of identity remains firmly rooted within the L1 culture and community” (pp. 10–11). Findings from the current study show that this is not necessarily true: in the post-secondary context, immersion students do consider membership within the target language community. Similar conclusions exist in other research contexts, beyond FI identity studies (Dagenais, Day, & Toohy, 2006; Makropoulos, 2005; Marshall & Laghzaoui, 2012; Roy & Galiev, 2011; Lemaire, 2014; Lamoureux, 2011, 2013; Séror & Weinberg, 2012; Roy, 2008, 2010; Roy & Galiev, 2011).

Significance of the study

By exploring how FI students construct their linguistic identity via the positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990), this study is able to show that FI students are not only subjectively positioned but also agentively positioned by the dominant monolingual groups, French and English. In addition, by focusing on first-year undergraduate students, this study is able to record and inform what happens after secondary school. Since not all FI Ontario graduates continue their FSL education after secondary school, this study is able to capture the experiences of those who do in fact choose to pursue FI in PSE. Moreover, because the study provides detailed accounts of students’ educational context and specific lived experiences (Dewey, 1938), it becomes possible to observe the influences of a changing habitus on linguistic identity in particular (Bourdieu, 1977), as the participants transition (Lamoureux, 2013) from an Ontario secondary school context to an Ontario PSE context.

This study adds information to the literature as it demonstrates that, as is already known, linguistic identity is fluid, but it is also constructed by the speaker as well as being influenced and shaped by the target language groups. In addition, this work furthers insight into FSL PSE, specifically FI education, as it is a lesser researched context than its elementary and secondary school counterparts. Consequently, Canadian stakeholders, which include secondary school and PSE teachers, researchers in second language education and FLS, parents, students, Ministry of Education representatives, lobbying groups such as Canadian Parents for French (CPF), and professional associations, can use this study’s insights and results to further shape how FI is taught in a post-secondary context in order to continue to improve student experience and encourage more students to continue their FSL education via an FI program at a post-secondary institution.

Pedagogical implications

With regards to linguistic identity, as seen via the positioning theory, this study has shown that teachers could allow more space to these very linguistic identities in their classroom. In the data, participants seldom mentioned whether lin-

guistic identity was explicitly discussed in class, in both the secondary school and PSE contexts. Based on these findings (and also those that show that reflexive and subjective positionings can shift linguistic identity), it is worth considering how teachers could be more engaged with students on this issue. It would be beneficial to discuss the concept of linguistic identity at the secondary school level to help prepare students for the experience of facing different types of positioning, whether interactive or subjective. Furthermore, stakeholders and administrators need to consider what benefits it would add, if current Ontario curriculum considered placing more emphasis on incorporating linguistic identity in the classroom. For example, as it stands now, current new FSL curriculum in Ontario does not address the concept of linguistic identity. Based on the results of this study, a clear distinction must be made between “confidence, proficiency and achievement” in a language and identification, acculturation, and appreciation of a language. In turn, this raises the question of what kind of positionings the FSL current curriculum is fostering for FI students if they have not established its vision in this regard. If students are experiencing identity struggles, as they did in this study, how will these continue to be enhanced, diminished, or exacerbated in the post-secondary context, especially if current programming at the secondary school level has not addressed this issue? In addition, the University of Ottawa RIF itself does not have a vision for linguistic identity in its program. Similar to the K–12 context, it would be beneficial for the RIF to consider the impact of creating a vision of linguistic identity construction within its already successful and well-received program. Currently, the RIF stance on the issue is more one of bilingualism as competency rather than bilingualism as identity. For example, in its program outcomes, the RIF lists various skills that students should have at the end of their program. In regards to “bilingualism”, it is framed as competence by the following: “Demonstrate autonomy and a positive attitude toward language learning and bilingualism; Use the second language with confidence for personal, academic and professional purposes” (University of Ottawa, 2014, p.8). The learning outcomes of the program do not address any other types of possible linguistic identity, focusing purely on competency. Given that these positionings are happening on campus, the current RIF program should consider addressing this reality and how to support students in this experience.

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