Introduction

From linguistic insecurity to security: Complexity and diversity of contexts

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Linguistic insecurity has become an important area of concern in recent years, especially in minority-speaking contexts, as illustrated by a growing body of international research on the subject (e.g., Baldaquí Escandell, 2011; Becker, 2021; Bergeron, 2019; Bessai, 2019; Blanchet et al., 2014; Cho, 2015; Daftari & Tavil, 2017; Desabrais, 2013; Feussi & Lorilleux, 2020 ; Foo & Tan, 2019; Gonzalez, 2011; Jean-Pierre, 2017; Lancereau-Forster & Martinez, 2018; Said-Sirhan, 2014). This interest can be explained, among other things, by the significant consequences that linguistic insecurity can have on individuals' language practices, social experiences, and educational pathways, as well as on the linguistic vitality of communities (Blanchet et al., 2014; Boudreau & Dubois, 2008; de Robillard, 2014; Francard et al., 1993). We, therefore, consider it essential to bring together recent research in this thematic issue that contributes directly to the advancement of scholarship on this subject. The articles presented here highlight the diversity of contexts and causes of linguistic insecurity, as well as its manifestations and consequences for individuals and communities. By grouping these articles here, it is possible to grasp the issue of linguistic insecurity in all its complexity.

Linguistic insecurity: Elements of definition

Linguistic insecurity emerges when speakers evaluate their language practices negatively, due to a perceived gap between their own practices and valued, prestigious, and legitimized linguistic forms (Bessai, 2019; de Robillard, 1994; Dewaele & Sevinç, 2017; Francard et al., 1993; Labov, 2006). What Calvet (1999/2006) and Bretegnier (1999) have identified as insecurity of form or normative insecurity — one type of linguistic insecurity they document in their respective works — concerns the perceived gap between linguistic uses in a

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language and the prescriptive norm in that language, i.e. what constitutes good speech*, le bon parler*. Calvet (1999/2006) identifies two other types of linguistic insecurity:

1. insecurity of status, when speakers feel that the status and value of the language variety they use is inferior to the status or value of another;
2. insecurity of identity, i.e., when speakers use varieties or forms of language different from those used by the linguistic community with which they identify.

To this, Bretegnier (1999) adds community insecurity, i.e., the feeling that one's linguistic community is at risk of assimilation by other communities. Finally, Calvet (1999/2006) points out that speakers can experience insecurity (or security) of one specific type or all types of linguistic insecurity, to varying degrees.

Manifestations of linguistic insecurity can take a variety of forms, depending on speakers and contexts. For example, speakers may hold discourses that devalue a linguistic variety or the linguistic forms they use (Bessai, 2019; Francard, 1993; Swiggers, 1993). Speakers may also try to hide an accent or conform to more prestigious or legitimate linguistic practices (Bessai, 2019; Boudreau & Dubois, 2008; Desabrais, 2013). In some cases, linguistic insecurity manifests itself in the abandonment of the use of certain languages, variations, or linguistic forms (Bessai, 2019, Boudreau & Dubois, 2008). In terms of identity, linguistic insecurity can be expressed by a difficulty in recognizing oneself, or having oneself recognized, as a member of a linguistic community (Desabrais, 2013). Linguistic insecurity can also be reflected in pessimistic views on the future of a language and its linguistic communities (Bretegnier, 1999; Francard, 1993; Foo & Tan, 2019).

Linguistic insecurity can thus be experienced in relation to a language (whether considered a first, second, additional language, etc.), a linguistic variety, a language register or certain linguistic forms, among others (Bergeron, 2019; Bessai, 2019; Desabrais, 2013). Although a low level of language proficiency can in some cases cause linguistic insecurity (e.g., Desabrais, 2013; Lancereau-Forster & Martinez, 2018; Pérez Castillejo, 2023), cases of linguistic insecurity have been observed among speakers with varied language skills (Baldaquí Escandell, 2011; Desabrais, 2013; Foo & Tan, 2019; Preston, 2013). This suggests that other factors are often more significant than language skills, and that linguistic insecurity is largely a matter of subjective experience (Swiggers, 1993). The same person may furthermore experience linguistic insecurity in more than one of the languages of their repertoire, for example in the language of schooling and in a heritage language. This is what Dewaele and Sevinç (2017) term *double language anxiety*.

The notion of language anxiety is often associated with that of linguistic insecurity. Both are used in research to describe similar phenomena, although there are distinctions between the two concepts. The notion of language anxiety has been mostly mobilized in research to describe the experiences of second or foreign language learners, or second language teachers, and the effect of this anxiety on language learning (e.g., MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Daftari & Tavil, 2017; Dong et al., 2022; Pérez Castillejo, 2023). Language anxiety is associated, for example, with feelings of self-confidence, risk-taking, motivation, and linguistic attitudes. Language anxiety belongs to the fields of psychology and applied linguistics; linguistic insecurity, however, is fundamentally a sociolinguistic concept applied to a wide variety of contexts and language practices.

Linguistic insecurity: A social phenomenon

Linguistic insecurity, often experienced and described on an individual level, may be analyzed on a social level as the expression of unbalanced power relations between social groups (Bergeron, 2019; Hall, 2014; Said-Sirhan, 2014). Behind the struggles of linguistic communities to establish, maintain, or gain recognition for the legitimacy of their language practices lie issues that go beyond the linguistic: social hierarchization, minorization, and social marginalization (Blanchet et al., 2014; Francard, 1993; Hall, 2014); themselves often stemming from colonial and postcolonial practices (Bessai, 2019; Blanchet et al., 2014; Foo & Tan, 2019).

In fact, many authors assert that linguistic insecurity is first and foremost a social phenomenon, since it is intimately linked to linguistic representations (Boudreau& Dubois, 2008; Calvet, 1999/2006; Francard, 1993), linguistic ideologies, such as the ideology of the standard and the ideology of authenticity (Becker, 2021; Bergeron, 2019; Blanchet et al., 2014; Hall, 2014; Preston, 2013), as well as to political (Blanchet et al., 2014) and economic ideologies, such as neoliberalism (Cho, 2015; Hall, 2014). Linguistic representations and ideologies particularly contribute to status insecurity, by giving more value and legitimacy to certain linguistic forms and practices than to others (Bergeron, 2019; Calvet, 1999/2006; Preston, 2013).

Linguistic judgments based on normative ideologies can lead to situations of intimidation and linguistic discrimination, which in turn can give rise to linguistic insecurity (Bergeron, 2019; Blanchet et al., 2014; Daftari & Tavil, 2017; Jean-Pierre, 2017). To counter feelings of linguistic insecurity, the fear of being judged negatively by their peers, or the fear of being the victim of linguistic discrimination, speakers will choose, for example, to use a language variety perceived as more prestigious, to the detriment of stigmatized language varieties (Baldaquí Escandell, 2011; Bessai, 2019; Boudreau & Dubois, 2008).

If social institutions, as levers of power, such as the state, schools, legislation, the media, etc. play a definite role in the emergence, maintenance, and reproduction of linguistic insecurity among individuals and communities (Becker, 2021; Bergeron, 2019; Blanchet et al., 2014; Francard et al., 1993; Foo & Tan, 2019), they can, in turn, play a role in countering linguistic insecurity. Indeed, linguistic security develops when policies, discourses, and practices contribute to a better status, greater use, and greater legitimacy of minority languages and their speakers (Becker, 2021; Blanchet et al., 2014; Calvet, 1999/2006; Foo & Tan, 2019; Gonzalez, 2011; Power et al., 2016).

The linguistic insecurity observed in schools (Francard et al., 1993) could, for example, be reduced by educational practices that instead aim to foster linguistic security, from elementary to post-secondary (Blanchet et al., 2014; Desabrais, 2013; Jean-Pierre, 2017; Lamoureux, 2015), such as valuing linguistic and cultural diversity (Bergeron, 2019; Blanchet et al., 2014; Wernicke, 2020), as well as shifting the emphasis from correction to accompanying speakers in their language learning journey (Bentley, 2020). That is why it is essential to look beyond *linguistic insecurity* and study the policies, discourses, practices, and strategies that promote *linguistic security*. However, de Robillard (1994) warns against idealizing linguistic security, which is (wrongly) attributed to monolingual practices. He believes that all speakers have a certain awareness that they will never completely master the prevailing norm, which he describes as *healthy* linguistic insecurity. According to de Robillard, fantasizing about linguistic security can paradoxically create even more linguistic insecurity.

The articles in this volume address the issues of linguistic insecurity from several angles, and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and approaches, highlighting its complexity. Case studies from Canada, the United States, Europe, Africa, and Australia illustrate the universal yet situated nature of linguistic insecurity.

Introduction to the volume

Isabelle Violette and Shayne-Eve Hébert's article analyzes the use of the keyword "linguistic insecurity" as an object of discourse in the Acadian and Quebec printed news. The authors aim to find out who talks about linguistic insecurity, for whom, in the name of whom or what, where, when, how, why, and with what effects. The quest for linguistic legitimacy, which can easily lead to feelings of linguistic insecurity, is a major preoccupation among Quebecers and Acadians. Quebec, Canada's only French-speaking province, represents a *fragile majority* (McAndrew, 2010). Language has been at the heart of social controversy for decades, and the quality of French is often discussed in the media. In comparison, Acadia, made up of the Atlantic provinces, represents

a strong minority — especially New Brunswick, the country's only officially bilingual province. To compare the situation between these two territories, the authors created a corpus from 95 texts of all kinds (i.e., analyses, columns, editorials, etc.) containing the keywords "linguistic insecurity". The texts selected were published in *La Presse* (in Quebec) or the *Acadie Nouvelle* (in Acadia) between 1990 and 2022. A greater number of texts (83%) containing "linguistic insecurity" were published in Quebec before 2010, while in Acadia, 90% of texts were published after 2010.

Data analysis is based on two complementary disciplines: critical sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. In their analysis, the authors reveal how the notion of linguistic insecurity is treated differently in the two newspapers. In Quebec, the term refers to concern about the future of French in the province and has a primarily political connotation. In Acadia, the term refers more to the validity of the language practices of the Acadian population; in such a social issue, from the voices of experts who try to make readers aware of the issue. Unlike *La Presse*, the issue is not political in the *Acadie Nouvelle*. The authors demonstrate that the use of the term linguistic insecurity is closely related to socio-political conditions unique to each territory and varies from one French-speaking community to another.

In her article, Jinhyun Cho examines linguistic stratification in Australia, focusing on the linguistic ideologies of translators and interpreters from immigrant backgrounds in relation to their wish for social mobility and their efforts to integrate. In Australia, in the current global context, English is generally perceived as a sign of modernity and development, necessary for professional advancement and social mobility. It is therefore worth examining how the ideas attached to English influence the mobility trajectories of individuals. Cho examines these trajectories by analyzing mediatized autobiographical narratives of translators and interpreters from immigrant backgrounds based in Australia. The 19 selected narratives were collected from *Practitioner Sportlight*, an online directory of the professional and personal journeys of translators and interpreters in Australia.

The critical thematic analysis of these narratives focuses on the discursive processes by which specific beliefs in English are constructed and naturalized in accordance with the dominant linguistic ideologies attached to English. Two main ideologies emerge from this analysis and which are discussed English as the language of the West and a means of access to the West, and English as the cause of and solution to migrants' struggles. In analyzing these ideologies, the author raises four key points:

1. English plays an important role in maintaining and reinforcing popular ideas that place the English-speaking, Western world in a position of superiority;

2. English is a significant challenge for immigrants, which means that translation and interpreting services are a means of social inclusion for marginalized people;
3. it is important to pay attention to how linguistic stratification shapes immigrant narratives since the linguistic ideologies identified by the author are consistent with popular discourses of English-centered linguistic stratification; and
4. linguistic ideologies are particularly important for studying linguistic stratification and linguistic insecurity.

Rebecca Alvarado and Angélique M. Blackburn propose, in their article, to study linguistic insecurity among speakers of minority languages and from immigrant communities in the United States, as well as effects of this insecurity on access to healthcare services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors focus on linguistic insecurity as a factor that, in addition to other language barriers, makes it difficult to access quality health care, as well as to obtain credible and useful information, particularly in the context of a health crisis. Through a literature review, the authors discuss six factors that particularly affected the healthcare experience of minority language speakers and immigrant populations during the pandemic, highlighting the role of linguistic insecurity for each, as well as their link to the phenomenon of misinformation. They conclude that linguistic insecurity does indeed contribute to the phenomenon of misinformation and hinders access to essential health information in times of health crisis, resulting in additional challenges for immigrant populations and speakers of minority languages, compared to speakers of majority languages.

Phyllis Dalley and Hannah Sutherland identify the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity observable in the Canadian context through the prism of glottophobia and linguicism. They suggest that this formal linguistic insecurity is linked to the glottophobia or internal linguicism of speakers of a language towards speakers of that same language. Linguistic insecurity of status would thus be the result of exogenous linguistic domination (as in the case of French, a minority language in Canada, in relation to English). The same applies to other languages, including Indigenous ones, which are dominated by French and English. However, assimilation and colonization have not completely subjugated French and other languages. Dalley and Sutherland call this phenomenon *language resilience*, a term that explains this continuity in a context of linguistic adversity. Language resilience can also be observed among Indigenous people and communities (not forgetting people of African descent) who cohabit with white people in French-language schools. They all experience racism. The notion of language resilience that the authors

discuss eventually evolved into a *raciolanguaging resilience*, with the aim of considering the impossibility of separating language and body. Regarding the French language, Dalley and Sutherland support an emancipatory language resilience based on the absence of domination by and against francophones. This would entail avoiding the linguistic comfort of certain Francophones at the expense of others.

Christian Bergeron focuses his research on student communities in Ontario, concentrating on the influence of the French norm (from France) and glottophobia. Based on the language practices of students in the Ottawa region, the author analyzes the current state of sociolinguistic pathways, linguistic insecurity, and glottophobia in that context. A trend shows that a good proportion of study participants have experienced or witnessed glottophobia in the last three years. The study of linguistic discrimination led Bergeron to identify strategies of linguistic insecurity among students. Faced with this linguistic obstacle, some participants in the study choose to avoid French or to censor themselves, opting for a refusal to use certain words, among other strategies. The author notes two trajectories for this phenomenon, one influenced by French norms and the other by linguistic discrimination. According to Bergeron, the presence of glottophobia in Ontario's French-speaking communities points to the need for awareness-raising, education, and collaboration to recognize the importance of plurilingualism and the legitimacy of French linguistic variations.

Frédéric Moussion, in turn, questions the shift from linguistic insecurity to linguistic security. He argues that this transition can be characterized by the phenomenon of *hypocorrection*. In this case, an awareness of the absence of conflict emerges. Thus, by reconsidering the importance of hypocorrection phenomena, the individual can exercise power over their own linguistic insecurity. In this light, Moussion redefines hypocorrection as at once representative of a process of conscientization, of risk-taking action, and of the passage from *said* linguistic insecurity to *acted* linguistic insecurity. He concludes that in the case of hypocorrection, which emerges in the context of strictly acted linguistic insecurity, individuals demonstrate risk-taking action. This can be counterproductive, however, as it can lead to a state of dispossession or frustration. However, when linguistic insecurity becomes critical, through an absence of conflict awareness, the individual becomes a subject and ends up in a situation of linguistic security. Moussion notes that the phenomenon of hypocorrection, implemented in the context of linguistic insecurity, leads to possible conflict resolution. In so doing, the individual becomes a subject, and can exercise an emancipatory empowerment over their own linguistic insecurity.

In her article, Yining Wang examines the factors influencing the family

language policies of three Chinese-Australian families raising bilingual children in Mandarin and English. She is particularly interested in the linguistic ideologies and emotional dimensions that influence the parents' decisions, not forgetting the children's agency in this process. Using a three-year ethnographic approach involving observations, semi-structured interviews, and photographs, the author shows that while emotions interact with parents' attitudes to language policy, these are embedded in power structures and linguistic hierarchies that extend beyond the family home. In the Australian context, where English is considered the pathway to academic and professional success, parents have to navigate the tensions between their dual objectives of transmitting and maintaining their heritage language and of ensuring their children's success in English at school. The research highlights the language anxiety that parents may feel about their children's language skills in Mandarin, English, or both, which they may consider insufficient.

Meike Wernicke's article is, in some respects, a response to those who see linguistic insecurity as an individual and psychological problem; here, linguistic insecurity is framed as a social problem that stems from sociopolitical, cultural, and racializing forces. The aim of this article is to highlight the social conception of linguistic insecurity based on data collected from a French-second-language teacher from British Columbia, Canada, while on a two-week professional training placement in France. The data come from the travel diary of this teacher, called Marie. Like most of her colleagues, Marie speaks French as a second language and completed her teacher training at an English-speaking Canadian university. Wernicke offers a thematic and discursive analysis of Marie's diary entries, identifying the discursive narrative strategies she employs to construct a legitimate professional identity in the face of certain devaluing comments. In the six diary extracts analyzed, Wernicke also highlights different linguistic ideologies that situate Canadian French varieties as illegitimate as pedagogical resources and devalued compared to European French varieties. Finally, Marie's experience and reflections are situated in the broader context from which linguistic insecurity emerges. Linguistic insecurity emerges from the social, historical, and systemic conditions surrounding speakers — not from a lack of individual confidence. To overcome linguistic insecurity, Wernicke proposes collectively transforming the linguistic representations that stem from past inequalities.

Corina Borri-Anadon, Marilyne Boisvert, and Eve Lemaire look at the linguistic ideologies held and transmitted by school-based Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP) working in Quebec, Canada, with plurilingual students from immigrant backgrounds. SLPs in Quebec schools are responsible for assessing and intervening with students presenting language or communication difficulties. These assessments and interventions — which are of course laden

with the different beliefs held by SLPs — can have an impact on students' sense of linguistic security. The authors therefore aim to examine the linguistic ideologies that emerge in the work of SLPs to shed light on their impact on this feeling. To this end, they analyzed 21 speech-language assessment reports of students from immigrant backgrounds and identified linguistic ideologies in the assessment practices of SLPs. The assessment reports were written by ten SLPs, and the 21 students assessed presented a variety of profiles in terms of language, migratory status, origin, and educational level. A thematic content analysis revealed four main linguistic ideologies.

First, imposed monolingualism is the ideology most present in the evaluation reports, and is manifested, among other things, by the choice to evaluate plurilingual students solely in French, without taking into consideration the other languages that make up the students' linguistic repertoire. Assimilationist monolingualism is a second ideology present in evaluation reports, manifested by documentation of the (negative) impact of other languages on students' learning of French. Segregationist multilingualism is a third ideology that appears in assessments; this is evident when SLPs separate languages to compare results and check for imbalance. Recommendations that favour exchanges based on a person-language association to avoid mixing languages also highlight this ideology. Finally, the ideology of plurilingualism was little observed in the reports. This appears when the speech therapist assesses students' language skills in several languages and recognizes their joint mobilization. The authors conclude with a discussion of their findings and offer insights into the impact of SLPs' language ideologies on students' sense of linguistic security.

In their article on the relationship to reading and writing, Brigitte Murray and Marie-Josée Vignola focus on English-speaking students pursuing university studies in a French immersion environment. The authors aim to describe the affective, conceptual, and praxeological dimensions of the participants' relationship with reading and writing in the context of their personal and professional lives. To this end, Murray and Vignola first present a few important characteristics of bilingualism in Canada to contextualize their study. Their theoretical framework is based primarily on an adapted version of Barré-De Miniac's (2000) model of the relationship to writing, and that of Chartrand and Blaser (2008). Four young women were recruited to participate in this study, all of whom were non-immigrant English speakers from Ontario, enrolled in the University of Ottawa's Baccalaureate and French Immersion programs, and range in age from 17 to 23. Data were collected using a written questionnaire and semi-structured individual interviews, then examined using a closed content analysis with pre-existing categories. The results indicate that linguistic insecurity in reading does not lead to the same reactions as

linguistic insecurity in writing. For example, linguistic insecurity in reading leads to avoidance: participants chose to read in English rather than in French. Linguistic insecurity in writing, however, led students to pay close attention to the quality of their writing and their work.

Nadia Vingadessin examines the linguistic insecurity that characterizes the Reunionese school system in English classes. She analyzes language-learning methods based on French monolingual ideology and questions the evaluation system in force in a multilingual environment. She concludes that the French education system and assessment methods, particularly in foreign languages, which are identical throughout France, are ineffective in Reunion Island. In fact, the French educational model has difficulty dealing with multilingualism in a predominantly Creole-speaking environment. This conclusion is underpinned by mixed French, interlectal forms between French and Creole, and unacquired or poorly assimilated English-language linguistic knowledge, made explicit in an insufficiently mastered French language. In Vingadessin's view, since French-language reading and analysis strategies are rudimentary among unbalanced bilingual learners (French-Creole), these learners cannot become operational and autonomous in the English language. According to Vingadessin, this situation is due to the lack of Creole-related pedagogical projects, leading to linguistic insecurity among learners in schools. To address this situation, Vingadessin argues that Reunion Island's cultural and linguistic differences must guide educational policies, in order to create a learning environment that respects the multilingualism of teachers and learners.

Gilbert Daouaga Samari applies the same dynamic of linguistic insecurity to the teaching of phonetic variation in French in Cameroon. His aim is to demonstrate that current pedagogical practices relating to the transmission of phonetic variation are likely to provoke a feeling of linguistic insecurity in learners. Based on phonetic variation training in the final year of secondary school, the author points out that the content selected poses a problem of didactical transposition. Daouaga Samari finds that this problem is due to this content being based on research findings that have obvious shortcomings. Instead of teaching learners to discriminate between the accents of their interlocutors to improve communication, current practices seem to focus on linguistic identification and description. These practices result in the transmission of judgments towards learners, with negative effects on linguistic security. According to Daouaga Samari, this content is taught using an inductive approach, which requires the use of authentic documents for enrichment. The author also maintains that the use of literary texts is limited, given the complexity of the content covered. He argues for a combination of communicative and metalinguistic objectives, to enable learners to understand

their interlocutors, whether they have an accent or not.

In an open topic article, Diana Burchell, Roksana Dobrin-De Grace, Elizabeth Kay-Raining Bird, and Xi Chen aim to better understand the factors that systemically limit access to Canadian French immersion (FI) programs, in a context where these programs are failing to meet the growing demand for admissions. The authors are particularly interested in the under-representation of special education needs students and students from low socio-economic status families in FI programs. Using semi-structured interviews with eight Ontario families of different socioeconomic status, with or without children with special education needs, the authors sought to identify and contrast experiences of enrolment and participation in early FI programs. Then, they were able to determine if and how children's special education needs and families' low socio-economic status influence these experiences and represent barriers to accessing FI programs. This study shows that families share positive representations of FI and have similar experiences. However, children's special education needs do become barriers to accessing FI programs, even when they are already enrolled: the difficulty of obtaining support or services leads many families to consider withdrawing their child from the program. Families of low socio-economic status, in turn, face even more obstacles, right from when they enroll in the program, and which is exacerbated if these families also include children with special educational needs.

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