Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics
Revue canadienne de linguistique appliquée

Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics (CJAL)
Revue canadienne de linguistique appliquée (RCLA)

A Youth Perspective on the Challenges Related to Fostering Linguistic Security in the Classroom: New Insights from the English-Dominant Context of British Columbia

Marie-Eve Bouchard

Volume 27, Number 3, Winter 2024

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1118853ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2024.33561

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1920-1818 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Bouchard, M.-E. (2024). A Youth Perspective on the Challenges Related to Fostering Linguistic Security in the Classroom: New Insights from the English-Dominant Context of British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics / Revue canadienne de linguistique appliquée*, *27*(3), 102–119. https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2024.33561

Article abstract

This study aims to identify factors contributing to linguistic insecurity and provides suggestions to support teachers in fostering linguistic security in their classrooms. The findings are based on data from interviews with 21 high school teachers from across the province of British Columbia (Canada) and a focus group with eight members of the Linguistic Security Committee. A thematic analysis of the data led to the identification of five sets of teacher beliefs associated with challenges about the fostering of linguistic security in their classrooms. For each of these challenges, the Linguistic Security Committee made recommendations, and these may prove helpful to teachers in French-speaking minority contexts across Canada. Three main conclusions are drawn from this study: attention to teacher beliefs should be a focus of educational research, teacher preparation grounded in a sociolinguistic understanding of linguistic variation is necessary, and linguistic security should be a priority.

A Youth Perspective on the Challenges Related to Fostering Linguistic Security in the Classroom: New Insights from the English-Dominant Context of British Columbia

Marie-Eve Bouchard
University of British Columbia

Abstract

This study aims to identify factors contributing to linguistic insecurity and provides suggestions to support teachers in fostering linguistic security in their classrooms. The findings are based on data from interviews with 21 high school teachers from across the province of British Columbia (Canada) and a focus group with eight members of the Linguistic Security Committee. A thematic analysis of the data led to the identification of five sets of teacher beliefs associated with challenges about the fostering of linguistic security in their classrooms. For each of these challenges, the Linguistic Security Committee made recommendations, and these may prove helpful to teachers in French-speaking minority contexts across Canada. Three main conclusions are drawn from this study: attention to teacher beliefs should be a focus of educational research, teacher preparation grounded in a sociolinguistic understanding of linguistic variation is necessary, and linguistic security should be a priority.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à identifier des facteurs contribuant à l'insécurité linguistique et formuler des suggestions pour aider les enseignants à favoriser la sécurité linguistique dans leurs classes. Les résultats sont basés sur des données provenant d'entretiens avec 21 enseignants du secondaire en Colombie-Britannique (Canada) et d'un groupe de discussion composé de huit membres du Comité sécurité linguistique. Une analyse thématique a permis d'identifier cinq ensembles de croyances des enseignants associées à des défis concernant la promotion de la sécurité linguistique dans leurs classes. Pour chacun de ces défis, le Comité sécurité linguistique a formulé des recommandations qui pourraient se révéler utiles aux enseignants en contexte minoritaire francophone. Trois conclusions principales sont tirées de cette étude : la recherche en éducation devrait se concentrer sur les croyances des enseignants, la préparation des enseignants doit être fondée sur une compréhension sociolinguistique de la variation linguistique et la sécurité linguistique devrait être une priorité.

A Youth Perspective on the Challenges Related to Fostering Linguistic Security in the Classroom: New Insights from the English-Dominant Context of British Columbia

Introduction

The *Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* (BC Francophone Youth Council, henceforth CJFCB) is a not-for-profit organisation created to promote, develop, and represent the interests of the French-speaking youth of British Columbia. In 2019, the CJFCB put together the Linguistic Security Committee – a committee by and for youth to address the topic of linguistic insecurity. The mission of the Linguistic Security Committee (henceforth LSC) is to offer interactive workshops to youth and community members in order to raise awareness and increase linguistic security within the French-speaking community of British Columbia. Linguistic insecurity is the feeling that a language variety one uses is somehow inferior, ugly, or bad (Meyerhoff, 2006). It can be reinforced in school by teachers who consistently monitor and correct the language variety used by their students (Canadian Parents for French, 2020). Teachers play an essential role in fostering linguistic security in their classrooms (Bouchard, 2024). Therefore, in order to raise awareness and increase linguistic security within the French-speaking community of British Columbia, the LSC wants to make every educational establishment of the Francophone School District of British Columbia a bastion of linguistic security (CJFCB, 2023). To this end, they aim to create a workshop for teachers in order to support them in choosing practices that foster linguistic security among their students. However, they were unsure about the teachers' experiences and perspectives on their role in increasing the confidence of the next generation of French speakers. This led to a collaboration between myself and the LSC.

The specific objectives of this partnership with the LSC are to: 1) explore and identify factors contributing to the feeling of linguistic insecurity in the classroom, 2) generate knowledge about the specific beliefs the teachers hold about the variety of French spoken in BC (in contrast with Quebec and France) and their understanding of linguistic security by conducting interviews with them, and 3) share the findings with the LSC and co-develop a workshop proposal based on the results to ensure greater precision in language security training. This paper addresses the first and second objectives more specifically, and it will serve as a basis for achieving the third objective. These objectives are in line with those of the LSC, which are to help young French speakers in British Columbia achieve their full potential through educational and community-oriented initiatives. For the LSC, this partnership is significant in that it provides research-based knowledge that is useful for orienting and enriching their future activities. For the scholarly world, this partnership is significant in that it provides an opportunity to produce under-researched data about language insecurity in British Columbia, in addition to engaging in a community-based project that supports the vitality of the French language in Canada outside the province of Quebec.

The current study contributes crucial knowledge to linguistic insecurity and our understanding of the use of French in the multilingual context of British Columbia. This, of course, might be helpful to other French-speaking communities across Canada, as linguistic insecurity has become an important area of concern in recent years (SNSL, 2023). More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions: What are the challenges regarding language security in the French-speaking schools of British

Columbia? How can teachers implement practices that overcome these challenges and foster linguistic security in their classrooms? The voice of the young members of the LSC (aged between 14 and 25) is central to our exploration of the best practices for fostering linguistic security in the classrooms, as it provides the perspective of young French speakers who have pursued (or are still pursuing) their high school education in a Francophone school in British Columbia. Interviews with teachers and focus group data with the LSC are analysed to identify some of the challenges the teachers face regarding linguistic security in their classrooms, and to provide suggestions to meet these challenges. This article is divided into four sections: a brief presentation of the theories of linguistic insecurity and teachers' beliefs; a description of the methodology, which includes participants, data collection and data analysis; the findings; and finally, discussion and implications.

Linguistic Insecurity and Teachers' Beliefs

Linguistic insecurity points directly to the beliefs that speakers have about their own linguistic usage and competence. It refers to the negative attitudes that speakers have towards their own and their group's language use and practices when compared to a standard variety (Bucci & Baxter, 1984), and it has been described as "a sense of unease, discomfort or anxiety" (OCOL, 2021) experienced when speaking or attempting to speak. Linguistic insecurity can be manifested, for instance, by hypercorrection, hesitation, or silence (Boudreau & Dubois, 1993; Labov, 1972), and it can lead to a loss of confidence in speaking a language, and eventually to the erosion of knowledge and ability in this language. The beginning of linguistic insecurity as an object of study is often associated with Labov (1966). However, the subjective experiences of linguistic insecurity and their consequences were not a central concern in Labov's work; he was rather interested in explaining patterns of sociolinguistic variation and he associated linguistic insecurity with socioeconomic class (Bretenier, 1999; Park, 2014). For Labov, linguistic insecurity develops with the existence of an ideal standard that speakers aspire to speak but are not able to, and it is accompanied by the development of the "doctrine of correctness" (Labov, 2006, p. 318). In other words, linguistic insecurity appears when there is a gap between the speaker's social aspiration for upward mobility (which is indexed by the ideal standard) and the speaker's actual social position (which is indexed by linguistic features that diverge from the ideal standard). There are many who feel linguistic insecurity at some point in their life; according to Labov (2006), "those who adopt a standard of correctness which is imposed from without, and from beyond the group which helped form their native speech pattern, are bound to show signs of linguistic insecurity" (p. 318). However, some groups are more likely than others to experience the systemic devaluation of their language practices. Studies have shown that devaluated language varieties, features, or accents tend to be associated with other social factors that have undergone or are undergoing a process of minorization, including race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and religion (Rosa, 2019). The concept of linguistic insecurity is also evident in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1982) and his analysis of the economics of language exchange. For Bourdieu (1982, p. 38), linguistic insecurity is manifested in the speech of the dominated when they submit, consciously or unconsciously, the stigmatized aspects of their pronunciation, their lexicon (with all forms of euphemism), their syntax; or in the confusion that makes them 'lose all

their abilities,' rendering them incapable of 'finding their words,' as if they were suddenly dispossessed of their own language.

Linguistic insecurity in the French-speaking world was first investigated in contexts where what is considered standard French is exogenous (Calvet, 1999; Canut, 1995; Francard et al. 1993; Gueunier et al., 1978). Nicole Gueunier and her colleagues (1978) were the first scholars to apply the concept of linguistic insecurity to the French-speaking world. They took interest in the attitudes of French people living in four different cities of France and its departments (Tours, Lille, Limoges, and La Réunion) towards the use of their variety of French and the ideal standard variety. They showed that their participants' feeling of insecurity related to the use of a non-standard variety. Later, the work of Michel Francard (1993) in the French-speaking community of Belgium was particularly important because he laid the foundation for a new linguistic insecurity framework. Francard replaced the quantitative approach that had been used until then by Labov and the other linguists with a qualitative approach; the new focus was the analysis of the speakers' discourse and representations of their own linguistic insecurity. He also highlighted the role that schools have in the development of linguistic insecurity: It would not be arbitrary to attribute to school institutions an essential role in the appearance of attitudes of linguistic insecurity (Francard, 1993, p. 40).

In Canada, linguistic insecurity has been an area of concern in recent years among the French-speaking minority communities. The *Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française* (French-Canadian Youth Federation) developed a National Strategy for Language Security (SNSL, 2023) and launched a strategy for language security in 2020, in consultation with Annette Boudreau, an expert on linguistic insecurity. According to McLaughlin (2021), linguistic insecurity has become an institutional concept in Canada; school boards and community associations across the Canadian Francophonie now take it into account and it is part of the discourses that guide the decisions made related to language. There is also a growing literature on linguistic insecurity in French-speaking minority communities outside the province of Quebec (especially in Ontario (e.g., Bergeron et al., 2022; Jean-Pierre, 2017) and New Brunswick (e.g., Boudreau, 2021; Boudreau & Dubois, 2008; Desabrais, 2013; McLaughlin, 2021)). However, there exists no detailed research on linguistic insecurity among the French-speaking communities of British Columbia, with the exception of Bouchard (2024). This study aims to contribute to filling this gap.

Because the emergence of attitudes of linguistic insecurity has been attributed to school institutions (Francard 1993), it raises the question of how teachers deal with issues of linguistic insecurity and how their personal beliefs may influence the practices they implement in their classrooms. As teachers are in everyday contact with students, assessing what their beliefs are may help us better understand how linguistic insecurity develops in school and what is needed to better support the teachers' daily work and their efforts to foster linguistic security in their classrooms. To my knowledge, there are also no studies on teacher beliefs and linguistic insecurity. Research on teacher beliefs dates back to the 1950s, but it only became a research object in educational research in the mid-1970s, with the growing interest in the study of teacher thinking. This is when scholars "began to describe teaching as a thoughtful profession in which teachers' thoughts, judgements, and decisions were seen as cognitive processes that shape their classroom practices" (Mo, 2020, p. 3). Fenstermacher (1979) predicted that the study of teacher beliefs would become the most important concept in educational research. And in fact, since the 1990s, research on

teacher beliefs has been thriving (e.g., Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Mo, 2020; and many others). Many scholars have provided definitions of the term *teacher beliefs* (e.g., Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Rokeach, 1968). Even so, the term has not yet been defined and used consistently in the field of educational research (Mo, 2020). The working definition I use in the current study is the one proposed by Kagan (1992) in which she sees teacher beliefs as "unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught" (p. 65). Studies on teacher beliefs share three basic assumptions: teachers' beliefs influence perception and judgement, teachers' beliefs play a role in how information about learning and teaching is translated into classroom practices, and understanding teachers' beliefs is key to improving teaching practices (Johnson, 1994). The relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices is a recurrent theme in the field of education research. Kagan (1992) considers that the existing work has shown that teachers' beliefs reflect the nature of the instruction they provide to students. However, many studies report incongruence between beliefs and practices. This is partly because the relationship between belief and practice is not a one-to-one correspondence (Breen et al., 2001; Li, 2013) and beliefs coexist within a complex system (Mo, 2020). In this study, we use teachers' beliefs as a starting point to address different challenges about the fostering of linguistic security in their classrooms.

Methods

This qualitative study was part of a larger project that had the overall aim of fostering linguistic security among young French speakers in British Columbia.[1] The findings derive from interview data with high school teachers from across the province and a focus group with the members of the LSC. Before conducting the interviews, I made participant observations in one high school in Metro Vancouver so as to familiarise myself with the Francophone education system of British Columbia and to examine the students' language practices. I attended about four classes a week for a total of two months, visiting different classes from grades 7 to 12. After making these observations, an e-mail was sent to all the high school teachers of the Francophone education system of British Columbia to invite them to conduct an interview to discuss their experiences as teachers as well as different beliefs and practices they implement in their classrooms to foster linguistic security. They were informed that the interview data would be used to create a workshop to support teachers in developing a feeling of linguistic security in their classrooms. Twenty-one teachers from different Francophone high schools in British Columbia responded positively to the invitation and were interviewed (January-February 2023) (Table 1). The semi-structured interviews were held online, in French, and they lasted between 40 and 85 minutes. Twenty hours of recording were transcribed and anonymized. These transcribed interviews were then submitted to a thematic analysis, with the overall aim of investigating the main challenges that teachers might have related to the fostering of their students' feeling of linguistic security at school. The thematic analysis followed the methodology of Braun and Clarke (2006) and sought to identify the main themes that emerged from the interviews. Data items were coded in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and were then collated into potential themes. Each theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 82).

Five main themes were identified; these themes represent five important challenges identified by teachers in their interviews about linguistic insecurity. These themes were then presented to the eight members of the LSC during a focus group (April 2023). The objective of this focus group was to share the findings of the analysis of the interview data with them and to initiate the co-development of a workshop proposal based on experiences shared by their teachers. This answers a critical need because there are very few resources adapted to the reality of British Columbia to support the teachers in choosing practices that foster linguistic security among their students. The LSC members were invited to share their knowledge and answer the following questions: What suggestions do you have for your teachers? How do you think they should address each of these challenges to support their students' feeling of linguistic security? Each theme was written on a large flip chart, and the five flip charts were spread across the room. The CSL members formed groups of two or three and circulated among the flip charts, spending 10 to 15 minutes on each of them. The different themes and their suggestions for addressing the different challenges are presented in the following section. This allows us to integrate the voice of young experts on the question of linguistic insecurity and to delve into steps for the immediate implementation of practices that can have a positive impact on the students' feeling of linguistic security.

Table 1
Teacher Participants

Name	Origin	Teaching subject(s)
Philippe	New Brunswick	Sciences
Sophie	France	Social sciences
Anne	British Columbia	Literature
Claudia	France	French and dramatic arts
Cassandre	Quebec	Maths and sciences
Luc	Quebec	French
Isabelle	Quebec	Social sciences
Lucas	Quebec	Physical education
Geneviève	Quebec	Maths, social justice, social sciences, Spanish
Auguste	France	French
Lisa	Quebec	Social sciences
Suzie	Quebec	French
Guillaume	Quebec	Social sciences
Caroline	British Columbia	Spanish
Alain	France	Social sciences
Pierre	France	French
Eva	Quebec	French, social sciences
Jean-Luc	British Columbia	Literature
Marie	France	Sciences
David	France	Music

Findings

In this section, I present and discuss the five main themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data with the teachers. Each theme corresponds to a set of beliefs associated with a challenge related to the implementation of practices that aim to foster linguistic security in the classroom. For each theme, I also present the results of the focus group with the LSC members. The excerpts that are presented below capture the essence of the beliefs shared by a number of teachers.

Lack of Preparation for a Minority Context

Most of the teachers who were interviewed come from and were trained in a French majority-speaking context (17 out of 21). This number is also representative of the teaching staff of the Francophone School Board of British Columbia as a whole. This means that these teachers have not necessarily been trained for the reality experienced by their students, who live in an English-dominant province of Canada where French is rarely heard and used outside their school. Some students do not even speak French at home. The absence of preparation for the teaching context of British Columbia was highlighted by a number of teachers when they were asked about the challenges they face:

> *Pas de soutien. Premièrement, d'entendre parler les enfants, moi, dans ma tête, je m'en venais dans une école francophone. Donc les enfants allaient parler comme toi, pis moi, comme mes enfants. Là, on arrive là, oh mon dieu, je m'aperçois que c'est pas ça du tout ça. C'est qu'ils ont de grandes difficultés. Il en a qui ont de la misère à parler français*. ['No support. First of all, to hear the kids speak, in my mind, I was going to a French-speaking school. So, the kids would talk like you and I, they would talk like my kids. But then getting there, oh my God, I realised that's not it at all. They have great difficulties. Some have trouble speaking French.'] (Suzie)

> *On m'avait dit à l'entrevue, faut pas s'attendre à ce que tu à ce que tu vivais au Québec. Mais ça s'est résumé à ça et donc c'est à dire, c'est bon, mais ça nous outille pas vraiment à savoir à quoi s'attendre nécessairement. Normalement j'ai pas… j'avais pas été préparé à ça, sinon justement j'aurais probablement pas vécu le premier mois que j'ai vécu*. ['At the interview, I was told not to expect what I had experienced in Quebec. But that's all it was, which is to say, that's good, but it doesn't really equip you to know what to expect. Generally, I wasn't... I wasn't prepared for that, otherwise that first month would have been different for me.'] (Luc)

In the first excerpt, Suzie expressed how surprised she was when she heard the students speaking French ("Oh my God, I realised that's not it at all"). She was expecting them to speak a variety of French similar to hers, i.e., Quebec French ("like you and I"). She also believes that they "have trouble speaking French." In the interviews with the teachers, the variety (or varieties) of French spoken by their students is (or are) often compared to those of Quebec or European French, which are perceived as the dominant and standardised varieties. This demonstrates a clear dominant language ideology. In the second excerpt, Luc is straightforward with his admission that he was not prepared for the context of British Columbia, even if he was informed during the interview that it would be different than in

Quebec. The first month was challenging for him and better information would have helped him prepare more adequately, and he also would have been better prepared to meet the needs of his students. These two excerpts indicate that there is a lack of preparation for the British Columbia context.

The LSC considers that it is important to prepare teachers to develop more appropriate responses to French in British Columbia, and to linguistic diversity in general, in order to foster linguistic security in students. This aligns with studies that have demonstrated the importance of preparing teachers for linguistic diversity in their classrooms. A great deal of research has demonstrated a strong connection between teachers' negative beliefs and attitudes about stigmatised language varieties, lower teacher expectations for students who speak them, and lower academic achievement (Bowie & Bond, 1994; Ferguson, 1998). The Francophone School Board of British Columbia could offer a workshop to all their new teachers about linguistic security, the sociolinguistic reality of their students, and their varieties of French. This responds to Alim's (2005) call "for a critical interdisciplinary dialogue between educators and sociolinguists" (p. 25). According to the LSC, the following information should be included in such a workshop: not all students identify as Francophone even if they attend a Francophone school; many students do not speak French at home; school might be the only place where they have access to French; some students lack the informal register that is most commonly used with friends and thus feel more comfortable in English; and all students want to communicate with their friends in the language of their choice – this might include French, English, or any forms of code mixing (e.g., *franglais*). Preparation grounded in sociolinguistic understandings of British Columbian French and the reality of their students can help teachers develop more positive attitudes towards students' varieties of French and help teachers develop pedagogical material that is adapted to their reality.

Difficulty Differentiating between Linguistic Insecurity and Shyness

Linguistic insecurity and shyness are related but two distinct concepts. Linguistic insecurity refers to a lack of confidence in the mind of a speaker about their language use and practices, while shyness refers to passivity, discomfort, emotional arousal, excessive self-focus, and inhibition in the presence of others (cf. Jones et al., 1986, on shyness). Both shy and linguistically insecure individuals can appear to be uncomfortable and anxious in social situations. Shy people may be more likely to feel linguistic insecurity, but people with linguistic insecurity may not necessarily be shy. Shyness is a personality trait, while linguistic insecurity is rather a symptom of other underlying issues, such as having limited access to a language, living in a minority context, or being a speaker of a stigmatised language. In the interviews with the teachers, the difficulty in differentiating the two concepts was recognised as a challenge. This is exemplified in the following excerpt:

> *Mais je sais pas si c'est juste un enfant qui est timide et que c'est sa personnalité, il y en a des introvertis qui vont jamais lever la main, une seule fois de l'année. Puis ils sont très bien là-dedans. Il y a possiblement de l'insécurité linguistique, puis il y a possiblement juste un trait de personnalité*. ['But I don't know if it's just a child who's shy and that's their personality, some are introverts and never raise their hand once all year. But they are fine with this. This might be linguistic insecurity, or it might just be a personality trait.'] (Geneviève)

For Geneviève, the manifestation of linguistic insecurity is similar to that of shyness, and she gives an example related to participation in the classroom to illustrate her point: a student who does not raise their hand in the classroom might be shy, or they might feel linguistic insecurity, or both. This is a fair point. For the LSC, the difficulty in differentiating the two concepts or their similarity is not a problem, as learning and implementing practices that foster linguistic security in the classroom will also be beneficial for the shy students. Whether a student is shy or feels linguistic insecurity, they will thrive better in a classroom environment that is safe and non-judgemental, and where mistakes are welcomed and valued because they are perceived as a learning tool. Creating such an environment is essential for students to develop linguistic security at school. It is also important not to force a student to speak in front of others (whether they are shy or feeling linguistic insecurity), but rather to offer alternative ways for students to participate until they gain more confidence in their use of a language. This can include working in smaller groups, working with friends they feel comfortable speaking with, or having time to practice before speaking out loud in front of the classroom, for instance. Finally, the LSC members perceive practice as essential: *La langue est un muscle. Entrainez-la!* [‘Language/the tongue is a muscle. Train it!’] Students should have various opportunities to speak, make errors, and try again.

Perception of a Lack of Pride in Their Francophonie

The mission of the Francophone School Board of British Columbia includes providing a French-language education for students attending the schools and promoting the development of a sense of belonging to French-speaking cultures. But a number of teachers believe that their students do not feel like they belong to the Francophonie or have a sense of pride about such belonging. For Claudia, this partly relates to linguistic insecurity and the underestimation of their own linguistic skills in French:

> *Je pense qu'ils sous-estiment leur capacité en français et qu'ils se pensent plutôt mauvais en général. Puis vu que je sais pas des fois ils le font, ils l'ont fait parce que les leurs parents les ont mis là, puis je veux dire, ils sont allés au [conseil scolaire francophone] parce que leurs parents les ont mis là, puis après, ils sont restés là parce qu'ils avaient leurs amis aussi.* [‘I think they underestimate their ability in French and they think they’re pretty bad in general. And since I don't know, sometimes they do it, they did it because their parents put them there, I mean, they went to the [Francophone School Board] because their parents put them there, then afterwards, they stayed because they had their friends.’] (Claudia)

Teenagers do not necessarily make their own decisions regarding their education and going to a French-speaking school might not be their choice, but rather their parents’. Like other teachers, Claudia considers that many students are in a French-speaking school because they have to and not because they want to. Their presence in the school does not indicate that they feel like they belong to the Francophonie, but rather results from a decision their parents made for them. In this case, linguistic insecurity comes hand-in-hand with the absence of a feeling of belonging to the French-speaking community of British Columbia, or the Francophonie in general. This view, however, which is shared by Claudia and a

number of teachers, needs to be nuanced, since a few teachers consider that their students are proud to be Francophone:

> *Je pense que pour la grande majorité de mes élèves, ils en sont contents et ils en sont aussi fiers finalement, même s'ils vont pas l'afficher 'waouh on est francophones on est francophones' mais ils savent qu'ils ont un plus et que ça va leur servir c'est sûr.* [I think that for the vast majority of my students, they're happy with it and they're proud of it in the end, even if they're not going to flaunt it, 'Wow, we're Francophone, we're Francophone, but they know that they've got something extra and that it's going to help them, that's for sure.] (Sophie)

Speaking French in the English-dominant context of British Columbia is a marketable skill (cf. Heller, 2003) and this is definitely an ideology that circulates in the province among first- and second-language speakers of French. This ideology in manifested in Sophie's interview ("they've got something extra and that it's going to help them") and associated with a sense of pride, even if it is not overtly displayed by the students.

In relation to this, the LSC members consider that the identities of the youth who attend the French-speaking schools of British Columbia are not necessarily Francophone only. In fact, most (if not all) of them are multilingual and many are multicultural. A Francophone identity cannot be forced onto them, regardless of the school board's mandate. Identity is multi-layered, co-constructed, shifting, and sometimes contradictory (Hua, 2017; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Language is central to the identification processes, and all of their languages have the potential to be included in the identification processes of these youth – not only French. The LSC believes that it is important to be aware that all students come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and again, that French might not be a language they use outside of school. Therefore, promoting a Francophone identity that is monolithic and not grounded in their realities can be problematic and counteract the efforts to develop a sense of belonging to the Francophonie. Getting to know the students and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds – as most teachers already do – is essential. Also, the teachers can help create spaces and activities where their students can experience and live their Francophonie, for instance by organising activities with other French-speaking schools where students can feel proud to speak French. By doing so, the students will have access to a variety of French that is more informal and less academic. Some students lack the informal vocabulary that is necessary to tell stories, make jokes, tease their friends, and play with language in French.

Difficulty Recognizing and Defining the BC variety of French

Since the early 2000s, Canadian federal policies have been prioritizing Francophone immigration from around the world in order to support the vitality of the French language in French-speaking minority communities outside the province of Quebec. In British Columbia, the number of people who speak French as a first official language increased by 8.3% between 2001 and 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Recent work in the French-speaking communities of British Columbia suggests that the young people of today form a new cosmopolitan French-speaking community and that they are the new real French British Columbians (Traisnel et al., 2013, p. 25). However, we know very little about the variety of French spoken in British Columbia (see Robillard 2021 for an exception and a

description of French in Victoria, BC). During the interviews, the teachers were asked to talk about the variety (or varieties) of French spoken in BC and by their students. All had difficulties describing what British Columbian French is when answering this question: How would you describe the British Colombian accent(s)? This is illustrated by the following excerpt:

> *C'est une question extraordinairement difficile. Je dirais que… (silence) comment dirais-je? (silence) C'est (silence) la difficulté c'est que nos élèves sont tellement un mélange de différentes origines, donc dans mes cours j'ai des Européens, j'ai des Québécois, j'ai des gens de l'Est, d'un peu partout, de l'Ontario, etc. Et puis, je dirais en fait que la minorité de mes élèves sont d'origine franco-colombienne. Dans ce sens-là, ils sont plutôt de première génération d'une… bon j'ai dit Québécois, Européens, de l'Est, peu importe. Donc, je suppose, pour répondre, c'est vraiment juste un accent qui est très varié. Si je dois penser à un accent type qu'on pourrait dire, c'est l'accent franco-colombien d'un élève, eh ben, c'est un petit peu, un tout petit peu anglophone, mais canadien en général, les Canadiens, ils prononcent certaines choses d'une certaine manière, euh, mais vraiment…* [It's an extraordinarily difficult question. I'd say that... (silence) how shall I put it? (silence) It's (silence) the difficulty is that our students are such a mix of different origins, so in my classes I have Europeans, I have Quebecers, I have people from the East, from all over, from Ontario, etc. And then, in fact, I'd say that the minority of my students are of Franco-Columbian origin. In that sense, they're more like first-generation... well, I said Quebecers, Europeans, Eastern Europeans, whatever. So, I guess, to answer, it's really just an accent that's very varied. If I have to think of a typical accent to speak of, it's a student's Franco-Columbian accent, well, it's a little bit, a very little bit Anglophone, but Canadian in general, Canadians, they pronounce certain things a certain way, uh, but really...] (Jean)

When trying to describe British Columbian French, the two most frequent phenomena the teachers identified were the influence of English and the contact between different varieties of French. Most French speakers in Canada have an understanding of what constitutes Quebec French or European French, but British Columbian French is harder to grasp and define. The difficulty of defining BC French was not directly associated with linguistic insecurity in the teachers' discourse, but I believe that a better understanding of what British Columbian French is would help the teachers support their students' feeling of linguistic security. Recognizing British Columbian French would also help the students move away from the dominant ideologies and practices and embrace a variety of French that is theirs.

The LSC and a number of teachers recognize that language variation is common and that accepting variation is key to creating a positive environment for the use of French (Bouchard, 2024). In preparation for teaching in British Columbia, teachers should receive training in sociolinguistics or linguistic variation. The members of the LSC want their teachers to know the following: first, their variety of French was formed in contact with their teachers (and sometimes family members and friends) who come from different French-speaking regions of the world, and second, it also results from contact with English. The French-speaking community of British Columbia is multicultural and multilingual; their French varies from other varieties spoken in Canada and elsewhere and results from contact with other language varieties.

Practices Implemented to Favour the Use of French Might Hinder the Feeling of Linguistic Security

All teachers who were interviewed are aware that linguistic insecurity is a problem among their students and they want to implement practices that would support the development of linguistic security in their classrooms. However, as teachers, they also have a responsibility to provide a French-language education for students and to promote the use of French. This contrasts with approaches that would allow students to use their English or multilingual skills in a way that creates an environment that is linguistically safe. Bouchard (2024) demonstrated that the practices implemented by some teachers to favour the use of French in their classroom are actually detrimental to linguistic security. This includes point-based contests that punish the use of English or reward the use of French-only, the obligation to speak only French in the classroom (rather than letting the students use their full language repertoire), and the prohibition against speaking languages other than French, as discussed in the following excerpt:

> *[Un collègue] a dit à une élève: "Soit tu parles en français soit tu parles pas". J'avoue je l'ai dit cette phrase aussi. Et encore je la tiens, puis je me dis que c'est horrible. On dit à un élève de se taire s'il parle pas en français, mais si ce qu'il a à dire, il sait pas le dire en français, ça veut dire qu'on l'empêche de s'exprimer. Donc c'est une phrase que je trouve vraiment dure. Voilà, je me questionne.* [[A colleague] said to a student "Either you speak French or you don't speak." I admit that I've said that sentence too. And I still do, but I tell myself it's horrible. We tell a student to shut up if they don't speak in French, but if they can't say what they have to say in French, that means we're preventing them from expressing themselves. It's a sentence I find really harsh. I'm questioning it.] (Marie)

In this excerpt, Marie recognizes that the French-only policy – which is an ideology transmitted by the school board and a number of teachers – might be silencing a number of students. Rather than seeing the reinforcement of French in the school (i.e., using French only) and linguistic security (i.e., feeling confident when speaking French – and any other languages) as two different missions, the LSC considers that reinforcing the feeling of linguistic security in French will naturally lead to a greater use of French in school. In this sense, fostering linguistic security comes first. In response to this theme, the LSC made the following suggestions to foster linguistic security *while* also favoring the use of French. First, teachers could provide for times in the classrooms when students can speak in a more relaxed way, including their language mixing practices, and clarify when only French should be used (rather than expecting the students to only use French all the time). Second, they could recognize the full linguistic repertoire of the students; English and the other languages the students might speak are part of their cultural background. This leads to a third suggestion, which is to not punish the use of English. By doing so, teachers are dismissing an important part of the students' identity. A fourth suggestion is to avoid correcting students' use of French in front of others. And finally, they invite teachers to embrace their own language-related errors. The different suggestions to foster linguistic security for each of the five challenges that emerged from the interviews with teachers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Suggestions for Teachers to Foster Linguistic Security in Their Classrooms (from a Youth Perspective)

Challenges to linguistic security	Suggestions to foster linguistic security
Lack of preparation for the minority context	Offer all new teachers (prior to contact with students) a workshop based on the sociolinguistic understandings of BC French and the reality of their students. This workshop should include information on linguistic diversity, the multicultural and multilinguistic backgrounds of the students, their diverse identities, and the importance of English in their lives.
Difficulty differentiating linguistic insecurity and shyness	Create a safe and non-judgemental space. Offer alternative ways to participate in the classroom until they gain confidence in their use of language. Work in smaller groups or with friends. Time to practice individually or in groups before speaking out loud in front of others. Offer various opportunities to speak, make mistakes, and try again.
Perception of a lack of pride in their Francophonie	Recognize the students' multilingual and multicultural backgrounds and identities. Promote positive activities and experiences in French. Support the students in acquiring a more informal register they can use with their friends in French.
Difficulty defining BC French	BC French, as with all other language varieties, is the result of contact. It is in fact characterised by the contact with different varieties of French and with English. Linguistic variation and outcomes of language contact could be included in the workshop offered to new teachers.
Practices implemented to favour the use of French might hinder the feeling of linguistic security	Reinforcing linguistic security will lead to a greater use of French. Allow for times when students can use their own ways of speaking French (including code-switching and *franglais,* for instance) in the classrooms. Avoid correcting a student's use of French in front of others. Value the students' full linguistic repertoire rather than punishing the use of English or other languages. Embrace all mistakes (their own and their students').

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, I presented five sets of beliefs associated with challenges related to the fostering of linguistic security in the classroom. These beliefs emerged from the interviews with high school teachers from the Francophone School Board of British Columbia. Each presentation of these sets of beliefs was followed by recommendations made by the young members of the LSC, a committee that has been offering workshops on the topic of linguistic security since 2019. By doing so, we give voice to a group of young French-speakers of British Columbia who are committed to the fostering of linguistic security in their province. We also reverse the traditional roles and invite young people to share their knowledge on the question of linguistic security with their teachers so the teachers can better support their students.

I draw three main conclusions from the findings of this study. First, attention to teacher beliefs should be a focus of educational research (cf. Pajares, 1992), as they can point out to where change is needed. The school is a critical agent of social change and teachers play an important role in the development of their students' feeling of linguistic security (Francard, 1993). Also, teachers' beliefs are likely to play an important role in shaping students' own beliefs. Therefore, a better understanding of teachers' beliefs and the different challenges they face regarding the development of linguistic security in the English-dominant context of British Columbia can help us better understand where intervention and training is needed. In this study, for instance, teacher beliefs about the lack of pride in a Francophone identity and the difficulty in recognizing British Columbian French as a variety of French on its own might hinder efforts to develop linguistic security. Being Francophone may be only one part of these multilingual students' identities, and it is probably detrimental to their feeling of linguistic security to have their variety of French compared to dominant varieties such as Quebec French and European French. Second, teacher preparation grounded in a sociolinguistic understanding of linguistic variation and the reality of the French-speaking minority of British Columbia can help teachers develop and implement practices that support their students' feeling of linguistic security. The recognition of a lack of preparation for the minority context is a challenge that was highlighted by most of the teachers who were interviewed. Based on the focus group with the LSC, it is clear that students are also aware of this issue. They recognize that their variety of French differs from that of most of their teachers and they feel like they are expected to speak a dominant variety of French – since it is, after all, the "correct" form. Together with the LSC, I argue that all teachers of the Francophone School Board of British Columbia (and elsewhere in French-speaking minority contexts of Canada) should receive training or participate in a workshop that specifically addresses the issue of linguistic insecurity, linguistic variation, the multicultural and multilinguistic backgrounds of the students, their diverse identities, and the importance of languages other than French in their lives. Third, linguistic security should be a priority; more so than the requirement to speak only French in the school. Why should teachers make it a priority to develop tools that foster linguistic security? The most important reason is that feeling linguistic insecurity is damaging and counterproductive. By supporting the students' feeling of linguistic security, teachers also support other challenges students might have (e.g., shyness) and they support the mission of the school board, which includes providing an education in French and fostering a sense of belonging to French-speaking cultures. To support the students' development of linguistic security, teachers must begin to implement pedagogies that

encourage the full range of students' linguistic resources and must avoid practices that disvalue other languages that students may speak or cultures with which students may identify. The information in Table 2 can be used as steps for immediate implementation in the classrooms.

Correspondence should be addressed to Marie-Eve Bouchard.
Email: me.bouchard@ubc.ca

Notes:

[1] Note that interviews were also conducted with high school students who are not part of the LSC. These will be discussed in future articles.

References

Alim, H. S. (2005). Critical language awareness in the United States: Revisiting issues and revising pedagogies in a resegregated society. *Educational Researcher*, *34*(7), 24–31. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3699797

Bergeron, C., Blanchet, P. et Lebon-Eyquem, M. (2022). Étude exploratoire de l'insécurité linguistique et de la glottophobie chez des étudiants universitaires de l'Ontario. *Minorités linguistiques et société*, *19*. 3-25. https://doi.org/10.7202/1094396ar

Bouchard, M-E. (2024). Language ideologies and the use of French in an English-dominant context of Canada: New insights into linguistic security. *Multilingua*, *43*(3). https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2023-0109

Boudreau, A. (2021). *Dire le silence : insécurité linguistique en Acadie 1867-1970*. Prise de Parole.

Boudreau, A. et Dubois, L. (1993). J'parle pas comme les Français de France ben c'est du français pareil : j'ai ma *own* p'tite langue. In M. Francard (Ed.), *L'insécurité linguistique dans les communautés francophones périphériques* (p. 147-168). Cahiers de l'Institut linguistique de Louvain.

Boudreau, A. et Dubois, L. (2008). Représentations, sécurité/insécurité linguistique et éducation en milieu minoritaire. Dans P. Dalley et S. Roy (dir.), Francophonies, minorités et pédagogie (p. 145–175). Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa.

Bourdieu, P. (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire : l'économie des échanges linguistiques*. Fayard.

Bowie, R. L., & Bond, C. L. (1994). Influencing teachers' attitudes toward Black English: Are we making a difference? *Journal of Teacher Education, 45*(2)*,* 112–118. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487194045002005

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2). 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Breen, M., Hird, B., Milton, M., Oliver, R., & Thwaite, A. (2001). Making sense of language teaching: Teachers' principles and classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics, 22*(4), 470-501. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/22.4.470

Bretenier, A. (1999). *Sécurité et insécurité linguistique. Approches sociolinguistique et pragmatique d'une situation de contacts de langues : la réunion* [Dissertation, Université de La Réunion & Université de Provence]. HAL open science. https://hal.science/tel-01517920

Bucci, W., & Baxter, M. (1984). Problems of linguistic insecurity in multicultural speech contexts. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 433*(1), 185-200. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1984.tb14767.x

Calvet, L.-J. (1999). *Pour une écologie des langues du monde*. Plon.

Canadian Parents for French. (2020, April). *Building linguistic security. Be brave, speak French.* https://cpf.ca/wp-content/uploads/CPF_2020_LinguisticSecurityBrief_EN_v9_EMAIL-1.pdf

Canut C. (1995). *Dynamique et imaginaire linguistiques dans les sociétés à tradition orale* [Dissertation, Université Paris 3].

Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CJFCB). (2023). *Comité sécurité linguistique de la C.-B*. Repéré le 10 octobre 2024 à https://www.cjfcb.com/programmation/comite-securite-linguistique-de-la-c-b

Desabrais, T. (2013). *Les mots pour le dire… L'influence de l'(in)sécurité linguistique sur l'expérience d'étudiantes de milieux francophones minoritaires canadiens inscrites aux études supérieures à l'Université d'Ottawa* [Dissertation, Université d'Ottawa]. Thèses uOttawa. https://ruor.uottawa.ca/items/8695a089-7f67-42f9-be04-e02319d6bdb7

Fenstermacher, G. (1979). A philosophical consideration of recent research on teacher effectiveness. *Review of research in education, 6,* 157–185. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1167245

Ferguson, R. F. (1998). Teachers' perceptions and expectations and the Black–White test scores gap. In C. Jencks, & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black–White test score gap* (pp. 273–317). Brookings Institution Press.

Francard, M. (1993). Trop proches pour ne pas être différents. Profils de l'insécurité linguistique dans la Communauté française de Belgique. In M. Francard, G. Geron, & R. Wilmet (Eds.), *L'insécurité linguistique dans les communautés francophones périphériques* (p. 61-70). Institut de linguistique. http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/75299

Gueunier, N., Genouvrier, É. et Khomsi, A. (1978). *Les Français devant la norme.* Champion.

Heller, M. (2003). Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language and identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 7*(4), 473-492. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2003.00238.x

Hua, Z. (2017). New orientations to identity in mobility. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of migration and language* (pp. 117–132). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315754512

Jean-Pierre, J. (2017). Le rêve inachevé d'étudier et de socialiser en français en toute sécurité linguistique : les perspectives d'étudiants franco-ontariens. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education / Revue canadienne d'enseignement supérieur, 47*(3), 120-135. https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1043241ar

Johnson, K. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10*(4), 439-452. https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X(94)90024-8

Jones, W. H., Briggs, S. R., & Smith T. G. (1986). Shyness: Conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(3), 629-639. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.3.629

Kagan, D. (1992). Implications of research on teachers' belief. *Educational Psychologist, 27*(1), 65–90. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2701_6

Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Center for Applied Linguistics.

Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistics patterns.* University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W. (2006). *The social stratification of English in New York City* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Li, L. (2013). The complexity of language teachers' beliefs and practice: One EFL teacher's theories. *The Language Learning Journal, 41*(2), 175–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2013.790132

McLaughlin, M. (2021). L'insécurité linguistique à travers le prisme des questions de classe sociale : le cas de l'Acadie. Dans É. Urbain et L. Arrighi (dirs.), *Retour en Acadie : penser les langues et la sociolinguistique à partir des marges : textes en hommage à Annette Boudreau* (p. 87-107). Presse de l'Université Laval.

Meyerhoff, M. (2006). *Introducing sociolinguistics.* Routledge.

Mo, X. (2020). Teaching reading and teacher beliefs: A sociocultural perspective. *English language education* (vol. 20). Springer.

Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL). (2021). Linguistic (in)security at work – Exploratory survey on official languages among federal government employees in Canada. https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/publications/studies-other-reports/2021/linguistic-insecurity-work-exploratory-survey-official

Pajares, M. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(3), 307–332. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543062003307

Park, J. S-Y. (2014). You say *ouch* and I say *aya.* Linguistic insecurity in a narrative of transnational work. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 24*(2), 241-260. https://doi.org/10.1075/japc.24.2.05par

Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853596483

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (2nd ed., pp. 102–119). Macmillan.

Robillard, S. (2021). *Implicit norms and 'school French' forms: Linguistic cohesion of second-generation francophones in Victoria, BC* [Dissertation, University of Ottawa]. uOttawa Theses. http://dx.doi.org/10.20381/ruor-25945

Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes, and values: A theory of organization and change*. Jossey-Bass.

Rosa, J. (2019). *Looking like a language, sounding like a race: Raciolinguistic ideologies and the learning of Latinidad*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190634728.001.0001

SNSL (2023). Stratégie nationale pour la sécurité linguistique. Repéré le 10 octobre 2024 à https://snsl.ca/

Statistics Canada. (2019). The French language in British Columbia, 2001to 2016: Facts and figures. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019017-eng.htm

Traisnel, C., Violette, I. et Gallant, N. (2013). Les minorités francophones canadiennes face à l'immigration : particularismes et représentations de la diversité ethnoculturelle dans les milieux associatifs. *Minorités linguistiques et sociétés, 2*, 9-28. https://doi.org/10.7202/1014843ar