Beyond Je m’appelle: Perceptions of Competence and Francophone Identity among French as a Second Language Speakers

by

Jennifer Steinke

Bachelor of Arts, University of Winnipeg, 2009

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

in the Department of French Faculty of Arts

© Jennifer Steinke

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2017
Approval

Name: Jennifer Steinke
Degree: Master of Arts
Title: Beyond Je m’appelle: Perceptions of Competence and Francophone Identity among French as a Second Language Speakers

Examin ing Committee: Chair: Jorge Calderón
Associate Professor
Gaëlle Planchenault
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor
Murray Munro
Supervisor
Professor
Department of Linguistics
Catherine Caws
External Examiner
Professor
Department of French
University of Victoria

Date Defended/Approved: April 13, 2017
Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016
Abstract

While many studies have examined the perception of second language (L2) learner competence by native speakers, few consider the perspectives of L2 learners themselves. This study seeks to explore the question of whether French L2 (FL2) speakers' self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC) influences their sense of belonging with the Francophone community. To do this, I interviewed six FL2 speakers attending university in British Columbia, Canada. Their responses, along with my own self-reflections, offer firsthand accounts of FL2 learning experiences and identity formation as French speakers in a minority French context. These narratives illustrate that the relationship between SPCC and identity is complex, multifaceted and ever-changing, and that even though participants had varying perspectives of their L2 competence, all of them ultimately felt unable to fully claim membership in the Canadian Francophone community. This raises questions of legitimacy and belonging for FL2 speakers in the Canadian context.

Keywords: French as a second language; self-perceived communicative competence; social identity; Francophone community; legitimacy; belonging
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late sister, Erica, and to my late grandmother, Mary; neither of whom had the chance to witness the final product of my hard work towards this Master's degree. Their encouragement meant the world to me and their love has given me the strength and courage to never give up on finishing this project.
Acknowledgements

I am so very grateful to those who have supported and encouraged me throughout my graduate studies and the writing of this thesis. First and foremost, I am thankful to my amazing wife, Jenni, for being a constant source of love, support and encouragement to me throughout this whole process. You have been an incredible listening ear and have been so very understanding for the time we have had to sacrifice together so that I could finish this study. I love you to the moon and back! Secondly, I would like to thank my program supervisor and mentor, Gaëlle. Je vous remercie de votre patience, de votre gentillesse et du temps que vous m’avez accordé au fil des trois dernières années. Je n’aurais pas pu terminer ce projet sans vos mots d’encouragement. J’admire votre dévouement à tous et toutes vos étudiant.e.s et vous m’avez inspiré à bien des égards. To Murray and Catherine, I appreciate your willingness to sit on my supervisory committee. At the time when I was taking classes with you both, I still did not quite know what direction this thesis would take. The content and projects of your courses helped shape my thinking and challenged me in new ways. Thank you to the faculty and staff in the SFU French department, especially Catherine Black, who was always encouraging and who took an interest in my life and studies. Thank you to everyone for your understanding and accommodation when I had to move back home midway through my degree. I would also very much like to thank my fellow graduate students at SFU, for your friendship and solidarity with me during my studies and time in Vancouver. To my friends and family in both Winnipeg and Vancouver, thank you all for supporting me in many ways over the past few years while I worked on this project, and for helping me in ways you will never know. Thank you as well to Lauren for devoting your spare time to proofreading my paper; I really appreciate it. Finally, I want to thank my participants, Sophie, Hasna, Allison, Ben, Luca and Eos. Thank you for giving up your time to take part in this study. I am so very grateful that there were other French learners out there who were as interested in competence and identity as I was! Your input into this study has been invaluable and I hope that I have done your words and experiences justice.
# Table of Contents

Approval ......................................................................................................................... ii  
Ethics Statement ........................................................................................................... iii  
Abstract ......................................................................................................................... iv  
Dedication ....................................................................................................................... v  
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... vi  
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... vii  
List of Tables ................................................................................................................... x  
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ xi  
List of Acronyms ........................................................................................................... xii

## Chapter 1. Introduction ................................................................................................. 1
  1.1. Becoming a French as a Second Language Speaker .............................................. 1  
      1.1.1. Beginnings ............................................................................................................... 1  
      1.1.2. First Experiences with French .................................................................................. 2  
      1.1.3. Gaining Fluency ..................................................................................................... 2  
  1.2. Exploring Second Language Identity ................................................................... 3  
  1.3. French Speakers & Francophone Identity .............................................................. 5  
  1.4. The Francophone Community in BC .................................................................... 6  
  1.5. Research Question & Methodology ...................................................................... 8

## Chapter 2. Literature Review ...................................................................................... 10
  2.1. Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................... 10  
      2.1.1. Social Identity Theory & Self-Categorization Theory ........................................... 10  
      2.1.2. Later Research on Identity .................................................................................... 12  
      Identifying with Groups ............................................................................................... 12  
      Identity as Socially Constructed through Language .................................................. 13  
      Identity Negotiation .................................................................................................... 14  
  2.2. Language Learning & Identity ............................................................................. 15  
      2.2.1. Negotiating Identity in the L2 .............................................................................. 15  
      2.2.2. L2 Learning & Investment .................................................................................... 17  
      2.2.3. Willingness to Communicate ............................................................................... 18  
      2.2.4. L2 Learner Identity and the Native Speaker ....................................................... 19  
  2.3. Competence in the L2 ......................................................................................... 21  
      2.3.1. Communicative Competence ............................................................................... 21  
      2.3.2. Self-Perceived Communicative Competence ....................................................... 23  
      2.3.3. Factors Correlated with SPCC ............................................................................. 23  
      Communication Apprehension & Anxiety .................................................................. 23  
      Willingness to Communicate ...................................................................................... 24  
      2.3.4. SPCC & Identity .................................................................................................. 25
List of Tables

Table 3.1. Knowledge of Official Languages, 2011 Census – Lower Mainland .................................................................................................................................................. 31

Table 4.1. Participants at a Glance ................................................................................................................................................. 48
List of Figures

Figure 6.1. Hypothetical FL2 Identity Continuum .................................................. 69
List of Acronyms

BC          British Columbia
CA          Communication apprehension
CF          Core French
CSF         Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique
EL1         English as a first/native language
EL2         English as a second language
FFCB        La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique
FI          French Immersion
FL1         French as a first/native language
FL2         French as a second/additional language
L1          First/native language
L2          Second/additional language
OFFA        Office of Francophone & Francophile Affairs
SFU         Simon Fraser University
SPCC        Self-perceived communicative competence
WTC         Willingness to communicate
Chapter 1.

Introduction

*We are forever shaped by our past and present experiences. (Laneheart, 1996, p. 325)*

1.1. Becoming a French as a Second Language Speaker

1.1.1. Beginnings

As far back as I can remember I have always wanted to learn French. Throughout my childhood I would tune in to the French channel on the radio or television, just to hear what was being said, even though I could never understand a word. When I went to the library I would flip through French books and magazines, just to see if I could recognize any words, but I could never make sense of what I was reading. Nevertheless, there was something captivating about this mysterious and melodic language. My parents owned a Céline Dion album that I liked to play, and my young mind wondered why there was a line over the e in her name; there was something special about that letter. When I learned that it was written that way because her name was French, and that she also sang in French, it was decided: I needed to learn French.

As a young child, I was always curious about other languages. Many of my friends’ parents spoke other languages and I found it fascinating that they could understand what their parents were saying to them, and even respond back in that language. It was French, however, that captured my attention: it was all around me, accessible, yet just out of reach. Growing up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, I knew that French was Canada’s other official language, and that some people living in the St. Boniface area of Winnipeg spoke French, as did many people living two provinces away in Quebec (that was where Céline Dion came from, after all). I wanted to speak French too, though in the first few years of elementary school, it was out of the question, as my school did not have a French Immersion (FI) program, and only the older students were
allowed to go to French class. I had to settle for using pretend French in my play for the time being.

1.1.2. First Experiences with French

At long last, the day came when I too was able to attend French class. We began with simple phrases and words for salutations, numbers, days of the week, clothing and animals. It was like learning to decipher a secret code and I reveled in it. We played games like French bingo and watched episodes of Téléfrançais\(^1\). I continued to take French classes for several more years, until grade nine, at which point my favourite expression in French was *Est-ce que je peux aller aux toilettes?* mainly because it was the longest phrase I could manage without looking at my textbook, and because it was quite a useful phrase, and one which we all used fairly regularly. While I knew it meant “Can I go to the washroom?” I did not really understand what each word in the sentence meant, or how to use the words in other sentences or in other combinations. Still, it was exciting to be stringing French words together and feel like I could speak it fluently. In my head, for that brief moment, I was a French speaker. After grade nine, my high school stopped offering French due to lack of interest from students. Disappointed, I waited for my next opportunity to study the language.

1.1.3. Gaining Fluency

Upon entering university a few years later, that opportunity came. I arrived at the University of Winnipeg in September, eager to resume learning French where I had left off. Equipped with not much more than some half-remembered vocabulary, a few verb conjugations, and my favourite phrase in case I needed to be excused from the classroom, I enrolled in an introductory French course designed for students like me, who had a basic knowledge of French but who had not completed FI. At first my professor spoke mostly English, but as the year went on, she incorporated more and more French into her explanations. I absorbed as much as I could about French grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and even culture: I was in my element. By the end of

\(^1\) Téléfrançais was a Canadian children’s French television series produced in the 1980s and shown in French language classrooms all over the country well into the 1990s.
the year, she spoke only French in class, and I answered only in French as well. I was on my way to becoming more and more fluent in the language.

I continued to take French language and literature courses over the next few years, alongside former FI students and Francophone Canadians, building on the foundation I had established in my first year of university. Towards the end of my undergraduate degree, I applied to participate in an exchange program, which would see me living and studying in Bordeaux, France for a semester abroad. My time in Bordeaux was like nothing I had ever experienced before. It was my first time travelling overseas, and my first time in an all-French environment. Though my time there was short, it seemed like I learned more there than I had learned in my entire time studying French in an academic context. I was able to use the language in everyday life situations, like at the grocery store or sending text messages to my French friends – things I had never done back home. My sociopragmatic competence in French would not be where it is today if I had not taken part in this program.

Since completing my undergraduate degree, I have worked in various places where I have had the opportunity to use my French in various ways, including formal and informal translation, as well as leisure activities. Recently I decided to pursue graduate studies in French linguistics, which made it possible to try my hand at teaching introductory French to first-year university students. Standing in front of my students, imparting my knowledge of French to them, I am reminded of my time as a young grade four student who had virtually no knowledge of the language, but who was eager to find the key to unlocking the door to understanding the language. I now also tutor French learners of all ages, meeting them where they are on their journeys to becoming French speakers. To connect with others who share the same desire to learn French like I did is truly a remarkable feeling.

1.2. Exploring Second Language Identity

At the young age of nine, I began a language-learning journey that would bring me to where I am today, more than 20 years later, a person who has completed two university degrees in French; who has lived for a semester abroad in France; who has
translated documents into French professionally; and who has taught French to university students. The journey has not always been easy; in fact, it has been somewhat of an uphill climb from the start. Learning a second or additional language (L2)\(^2\) most certainly has its challenges! Nevertheless, I have persevered, determined to reach my goal of becoming a competent user of French. Though I believe I have reached that goal in a manner of speaking, I recognize that I still learn something new about the language every time I have the opportunity use it, either in reading, writing, or just conversing with other French speakers.

Reflecting now on my past experiences, I can plainly see that my desire to learn the French language led me to actively pursue the development and growth of my identity as a French as a second language (FL2)\(^3\) speaker. Learning an L2 can be difficult but enriching for people; it can also influence L2 learners’ overall identities. In fact, it was actually during the early years of my FL2 identity formation, the mid-1990s, when researchers began to examine the role of language and L2 learning in identity construction (Block, 2007; Byram, 1999; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Spolsky, 1999; Wetherell, 1996). Over the past 20 years, research has revealed that an individual’s identity is complex, socially constructed, and in a state of flux, continually being negotiated and changed either consciously or unconsciously through social discourse (Block, 2007; Khatib & Ghamari, 2011; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Riley, 2007). According to Norton Peirce (1995), language is “constitutive of and constituted by a language learner’s social identity. It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time,” (p. 13). Language, then, is the medium through which a person expresses his or her identity (Moyer, 2013). When it comes to learning another language, one’s identity becomes even more complex and multifaceted, as the L2

---

\(^2\) When I use the term L2 in this paper, I am referring to a language that a speaker adds to his or her linguistic repertoire after learning his or her first language (L1). An L2 can be learning either informally (through interactions with others) or formally (as in an academic context or program of self-instruction), (Spolsky, 1999).

\(^3\) When I refer to FL2 identity in this paper, I am referring to the influence that knowing and using French has on the overall identity of FL2 speakers.
learner\(^4\) takes on new aspects of his or her identity through interactions in the L2 (Hansen Edwards, 2008; Kinginger, 2004; Planchenault, 2013).

To be sure, the way a person perceives his or her identity as an L2 speaker (or L2 identity) has a great deal to do with his or her competence in the L2. Recently, researchers have started to look more closely at the relationship between competence in the L2 and L2 identity. Many see L2 competence as being closely related to identity (Cole & Meadows, 2013). For instance, Kang & Kim (2012) found that self-assessed competence in their participants’ heritage L2, Korean, was positively correlated with their self-identification with their Korean ethnicity, or with others that share Korean ethnicity as well. In this way, one’s identity can imply that she or he identifies with a larger group of people, whether that be with regards to ethnicity, language, gender, age, and the list goes on. Identifying with a language group in particular can be seen as claiming membership in that linguistic community (Stebbins, 2000).

1.3. French Speakers & Francophone Identity

The question of identifying with linguistic communities is highly relevant in the Canadian context when we consider the Francophone community. Historically speaking, French speakers played a key role in the founding of Canada, and today French, along with English, is one of the two official languages of the country. These days, even though Canada is such a multicultural country, comprised of speakers of countless indigenous, Asian, African and European languages, it is English and French that have legal, elevated status across all provinces. Even in French minority provinces, French speakers have the right to access government services at the federal, provincial, and sometimes even municipal levels, although the reality is that French is still seen as a secondary language to English in most provinces other than Quebec and New Brunswick, and is not offered in all cases.

\(^4\) I interchangeably use the terms \textit{L2 learner}, \textit{L2 user} and \textit{L2 speaker} to denote those who have learned an L2 and who continue to use it to communicate in various ways with other speakers of that language and/or for individually-oriented activities like reading or watching films.
Just as the French language has evolved since arriving in Canada, Canadian Francophone identity has changed too. The topic of Francophone identity is in itself a complex topic. While “Francophone” technically denotes a person who can speak French (Éditions Larousse, n.d., Francophone), in reality there is much more to Canadian Francophone identity than just the ability to speak the language. Generally, when referring to Francophones in Canada, we are talking about French as a first language (FL1) speakers, a group who likely learned French at home as children (Stebbins, 2000). The term “Francophone,” as it is used currently across the country started to appear in Canadian lexicon in the 1970s (Boudreau, 2013), coinciding with the increase in recognition of French as an official language. Together, Francophones around Canada and even around the world are regarded as members of la francophonie, people who prefer to express themselves and live daily life in French (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c).

Linguistically speaking, however, one does not have to speak FL1 in order to be considered Francophone: one simply needs to speak French and understand it well enough to use it in “a main sphere of everyday life, whether inside or outside the home” (Stebbins, 2000, p. 20). By this standard, I myself, and all of the participants in this study, could consider ourselves to be Francophones, although it is not always that simple for FL2 speakers to claim that identity. Many regard the Francophone community as having a specific and shared language, but also a shared heritage and culture in common. Francophones constitute a community unto themselves, and one must possess certain characteristics to be a member of the community. As this study reveals, claiming Francophone identity involves more than just speaking the French language. When dealing specifically with the question of Francophone identity, other factors such as heritage, legitimacy, ethnicity and participation in or adhesion to the culture of the community must also be considered.

1.4. The Francophone Community in BC

Located on Canada’s west coast, the province of British Columbia (BC) is an interesting province to conduct a study on Francophone identity. BC is a very multilingual and multicultural province, though the vast majority of residents are
Anglophones. Very few Francophones live here, compared to other Francophone-minority provinces in the West. According to the 2011 Census, of the total population of BC, a mere 1.6% of residents claimed French as their first language (L1), while 72.1% claimed English as their L1, (Statistics Canada, 2011). The Lower Mainland, where just over half of BC’s population resides, is comprised of the city of Vancouver and 20 surrounding municipalities. There, 87.2% of the population can speak only English, compared to 0.1% who can only speak French, (Statistics Canada, 2012). When you look at those who are able to speak both official languages, you find that these individuals make up 7.2% of the Lower Mainland’s population (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Nevertheless, the number of French speakers in BC has been growing steadily over the past 40 years. This trend can no doubt be attributed in part to the rise in enrolment in FI and Core French\(^5\) (CF) programs, since their inceptions in BC in 1969 and 1978 respectively (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2010). Most of the students in these programs are not FL1 speakers; rather, their parents enrol them in hopes that their children will become bilingual and will later have access to more economic opportunities because of their knowledge of an L2. Particularly in the last 12 to 14 years, the FI program has grown consistently, but many believe that growth would be much higher if only schools had more room for students in FI programs, as demand is high but space is limited (Friesen, 2013). In addition to FI and CF programs in the province, there exist around 30 Francophone schools, designed for FL1 students or for students whose parents are Francophone. They are administered by the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), the Francophone school division in BC.

According to the Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch (n.d.), approximately 277,000 students from kindergarten to grade 12 are currently learning FL2. Of this number, 45,000 are enrolled in FI, 232,000 in CF, and 4,300 in francophone programs. Beyond grade 12, graduates of these French programs can choose among many post-secondary institutions in the Lower Mainland, which offer French language and literature programs, as well as other programs where the language of instruction is French (Canadian Parents for French, 2016b).

\(^{5}\) Core French programs offer students the chance to study the French language as an elective.
Outside of the academic context, there are many services that cater to the Francophone community in the Lower Mainland. Apart from the expected government services, one can find other places where services are offered in French: centres for the arts, community centres, counselling services, dentists’ offices, and law firms, to name a few (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2013-14). Francophone organizations such as la Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique (FFCB) and la Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique exist to specifically serve the Francophone community in the Lower Mainland. I talk more about French speakers and the Francophone community in BC in Chapter 3: Sociolinguistic Context.

1.5. Research Question & Methodology

For the majority of students using French in an academic context in BC, French is their L2, not their L1. The way these students go about constructing, defining and negotiating their identities in French is varied and complex. One way we can begin to understand how L2 identity construction and negotiation occurs in such a context is by delving into these students’ experiences and stories. Like myself, all of the participants in this study have learned FL2 in academic institutions situated in geographical areas where English is the dominant language. Each individual’s L2 learning experience is unique, just as each individual’s sense of self is unique because every learner has his or her own perceptions of his or her linguistic abilities, or self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC). While much research has been carried out around perception of L2 competence by native speakers of those languages (Beinhoff, 2013; Marx, 2002; Moyer, 2013; Piske, Mackay & Flege, 2001), there is a gap in the research on how self-perception of one’s competence in the L2 influences one’s L2 identity. This is especially true when it relates to 1) learning and using L2 French as an adult in a minority context in Canada; and 2) feeling a sense of belonging with the Canadian Francophone community. This study therefore will explore the question of whether one’s SPCC in the L2 plays a role in his or her sense of belonging in the community of L2 users. In other words, does SPCC in FL2 influence the FL2 speaker’s ability to see herself or himself as part of the Francophone community, whether in BC, Canada or the world?
In order to respond to this question, I surveyed the historical and current situation of French language services and of the Francophone community in BC’s Lower Mainland, in addition to examining Francophone identity, or in other words, what it means to be Francophone. I consider language learner perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of six post-secondary students who, at the time of the study, were studying French at Simon Fraser University (SFU), a large post-secondary institution with three locations throughout the Lower Mainland, which offers a vast array of French courses and certificate and degree programs (Simon Fraser University, “Undergraduate Programs,” n.d.). SFU provides an optimal setting to carry out this research, as it is itself a multicultural and multilingual university, and therefore quite representative of BC’s population. Proportion-wise, SFU’s student body is similar to the population of BC: of SFU’s approximately 30,000 undergraduate students, around 90% speak English at home, while about 4% speak French at home (SFU Institutional Research & Planning, 2016). The six students who voluntarily participated in this study were chosen from among current SFU students studying French. Through questionnaires and in-depth one-on-one interviews, they each painted a picture of what the FL2 learning experience has been like for them thus far. Their stories give us a glimpse into the complexities and many aspects to SPCC in French and their own social identity as FL2 speakers.

I have chosen to take a qualitative approach to my study because it is my belief that people’s narratives can provide a richer and more detailed description of their experiences than a simple questionnaire can capture. Many researchers have found value in this type of methodology when exploring L2 identity, like studies undertaken by Feuer (2013), Jackson (2008), Kinginger (2004), Laneheart (1996), Marx (2002) and Piller (2002b), among others. Where relevant, I also incorporate my own L2 learning experience in the form of self-reflection. Self-reflection is a more recent development in L2 identity methodology that can offer yet even more insight into the mind of a FL2 learner user who is also the researcher (Laneheart, 1996; Marx, 2002). By recounting perceptions and stories of both my participants and myself, I hope to add to this study an interesting, self-narrative dimension, one that has not been explored before in the area of L2 learning, identity and SPCC in French.
Chapter 2.

Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Social Identity Theory & Self-Categorization Theory

To better understand current perspectives on second language (L2) identity, we must first consider the research done over the years on social identity. Early research in this area was done in Britain by Henry Tajfel, who originally explored social beliefs, perceptions, and cognitive aspects specifically of racism, prejudice and discrimination throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It was not until the 1970s, however, that he developed his now widely-cited Social Identity Theory, in collaboration with John Turner and other colleagues (Hogg, 1996). Studies conducted by Tajfel in the early 1970s found that when he randomly sorted participants into groups and assigned them roles, participants tended to favour those in their own group over those in other groups, even going so far as to discriminate against those outside of their groups (Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds & Schmitt, 2010; Turner & Onorato, 1999). In other words, he found that simply categorizing people into groups was enough to “produce intergroup behaviour in which participants favored ingroup others over outgroup others” (Turner & Onorato, 1999, p. 18). At first, social identity theory was employed when referring to an individual’s membership to a social group. According to Tajfel (1978), a “group” does not just include those with face-to-face relationships with each other; rather the term denotes “a cognitive entity that is meaningful to the individual at a particular point of time” (p. 119). Groups are defined by the presence or existence of other groups, and in fact a group has no meaning in the absence of other groups (Tajfel, 1978). Of course, one can be a member of many groups at once, but some group memberships will be more salient than others. Tajfel states that being a member of many social groups is actually important to the individual’s self-definition, as this contributes, both positively and negatively, to his or her self-image (Tajfel, 1978). One’s beliefs about his or her group membership, even if those beliefs are not accurate reflections of reality, can influence

6 A list of acronyms used in this paper can be found on page xii.
one’s ingroup and outgroup behaviour. In all, it is group membership that is key to one’s social identity, which Tajfel later went on to define as “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 251).

One of the key processes in social identity theory is the process of categorization. According to Hogg (1996), categorization “clarifies intergroup boundaries by producing group stereotypical and normative perceptions and actions, and assigns people, including self, to the contextually relevant category” (p. 67). This process occurs on a cognitive level. It is this concept that Turner explored in the 1970s and 1980s, and eventually developed it into his Self-Categorization Theory (Turner & Onorato, 1999). Turner’s theory focuses more on the role of the individual’s cognitive processes, and on categories rather than groups in the formation of social identity (Hogg, 1996). It is true that Tajfel (1978) had referred to social categories in his work, stating that they were a way of grouping others in a manner that makes sense to the individual, but it was Turner (1982) who highlighted the role of perception in this cognitive process. He defined a social group as “two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves or [...] perceive themselves to be members of the same social category” (Turner, 1982, p. 15). Social categories are perceived at a cognitive level, and a person defines herself or himself through those social categories to which she or he belongs or does not belong. Categorization does not just occur in one’s own head, though. People categorize and re-categorize themselves and others all of the time. Someone who may be categorized as different categories in one context (for example, French speakers from Quebec and those from France) may be perceived as similar in another context (for example, as one overall category of French speakers) (Turner & Onorato, 1999). In the process of self-categorization, there is both self-perception and person-perception involved, and this is almost always done through interaction (Turner & Onorato, 1999).

In essence, self-categorization is the individual’s perception of and membership in social categories that determine his or her self-identification in one or more categories. For this to happen, the individual must feel a sense of belonging with a particular group or community. Similar to Tajfel’s (1978) definition of “social group,” Gusfield (1975) says that the term “community” can be used either in the geographical sense (like in the case of a neighbourhood, city or province, for instance), or in the relational sense (when
people relate to each other in some way, or share some commonality). This definition of community is still used today, as seen when looking up the meaning of the word: community is a “social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists” (Dictionary.com, 2017, Community). Membership in a given community depends on one’s feeling, or sense, of belonging in a particular community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Further, just like in the process of self-categorization, self-perceptions and perceptions of others are involved in determining group or community membership. This study deals with both ways of looking community, as I ask participants specifically about relating to the Francophone community in both BC and Canada.

2.1.2. Later Research on Identity

Identifying with Groups

Since the mid-1990s, research in the area of social identity has used both social identity theory and self-categorization theory as a springboard for further exploring social identity. One area that remains central is the importance of groups or categories in social identity construction. In today’s research, a social group or category can still be defined by such parameters as ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, social class, and language, but most researchers are now in agreement that these categories are fluid and unstable (Block, 2007; Mitchell, Myles & Marsden, 2013). Groups themselves are formed externally in the world, but also on an individual basis, contributing to one’s sense of self and altering cognitive processes and behaviour (Haslam et al., 2010). A person can belong to many groups at one time and therefore have many social identities, either consciously or subconsciously, and deliberately or inevitably, and this can change over time and over different contexts (Byram, 1999). The groups to which someone belongs are not always chosen by that individual; indeed, she or he may be assigned to a certain group by others depending on outward appearances or behaviours (Byram, 1999). According to Mitchell et al. (2013), social identity is feeling a “sense of belonging to a particular social group” (p. 276). In speaking about this sense of belonging, Byram (1999) says that belonging to a group is only defined by the existence of other groups. Thus, if a 15-year-old belongs, by virtue of her age, to the social group of “adolescent” she does so because other age groups such as “child”, “middle-aged
person” or “senior” exist, and she does not belong to any of those. Of course, even though she may belong to a certain age group, she may still identify with other age groups for various reasons, including personal convictions or ways of speaking, for instance.

**Identity as Socially Constructed through Language**

Many researchers are also now in agreement that identity is constructed and maintained on social ground (Block, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Byram, 1999; Moyer, 2013). It is through relationships with others that one’s identity emerges and is shaped, as the individual continually perceives and is perceived by others with whom she or he comes into contact (Byram, 1999; Khatib & Ghamari, 2011). A person can have many identities, and these identities are mutually dependent on others around him or her (Wetherell, 1996). Identities do not necessarily pre-exist inside the person’s head; rather, they emerge through dress, bodily movements, actions and language as the individual shares beliefs, needs, values, goals and activities with members of various social groups (Block, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Gluszek, Newheiser & Dovidio, 2011).

For the purposes of this project, I will focus on the fact that identities emerge through language, or discourse, for an overwhelming number of researchers believe that identities are constructed and co-constructed through social interaction with others (Moyer, 2013; Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Piller, 2002a; Wetherell, 1996). Identity is not something that exists within us—it is not something that simply is—it is something we practise, and something that comes into being as we interact with others (Cole & Meadows, 2013; Planchenault, 2013). As Riley (2007) states, “Discussing social identity as if it were an intrinsic quality of one person makes about as much sense as discussing the sound of one hand clapping” (p. 87). Rather than taking identity as an intrinsic quality, then, especially for this study, I consider it as emerging through discourse. Speakers continually construct and re-construct their identities depending on their relationships to those in various social groups: relationships which can, at times, be unequal (Miller, 2004; Moyer, 2013; Norton, 2000). As Norton Peirce (1995) puts it, a person is both “a subject of and subject to relations of power” (p.15). So if a native English speaker (EL1) is speaking to a speaker of English L2 (EL2), both speakers may sense a power imbalance, when it comes to belonging to the English-speaking community (i.e. the EL1 speaker has more power to
consider herself or himself as part of the EL1 social group) (Rubdy, 2015). On the other hand, if one perceives herself or himself or is perceived by others (members of the English or other linguistic communities) as a member of the English-speaking group of speakers, consciously or not, she or he will see herself or himself as belonging to the group (Cook, 1999). More and more when referring to language groups, researchers use the term *speech community*, specifically to designate “a social group who share a common set of norms and expectations regarding the use of language” (Mitchell et. al., 2013, p. 305). Speakers thus identify themselves with, and may be identified as members of, any given speech community through their language practices (Beinhoff, 2013; Cook, 1999; Kramsch, 1998).

**Identity Negotiation**

“Identity is a multi-layered phenomenon,” says Block (2007, p. 187), and indeed, this is true when we begin to understand that instead of possessing one unified identity, individuals may hold multiple identities at once in multiple contexts, which may or may not contradict one another (Marx, 2002). Together these identities make up the self, and they must be negotiated both in the individual’s mind, and through interactions with others, in order to “position or reposition particular individuals or groups” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 20). Another way of considering this positioning is by referring to one’s various identities as *subject positions*, a term used to refer to how an individual sees herself or himself in various contexts (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2004; Kramsch, 1997; Norton, 2000). An individual’s identity is continually and consciously or subconsciously negotiated according to the various subject positions she holds (Hansen Edwards, 2008), so for example, a person can identify as a mother, a daughter, a sister, a wife, an account manager and/or a customer in a store at various points of time and space, and the list can go on. Each subject position carries certain goals, expectations and behaviours, so the individual must learn to navigate each position separately, or sometimes at once, depending on the context, for subject positions can intersect and can be in competition with one another. When this happens, they must be renegotiated (Block, 2007).

Overall, the individual’s identity is in a constant state of flux, changing over time and space, with regards to social, educational and economic contexts and more (Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995). Norton (2000) talks about this phenomenon in
her comprehensive definition of identity: Identity is “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). This holds true for all individuals: we all age, for instance, so there is no way to stay in any age category for very long (although there are those individuals who may behave like they belong to a younger age category all their lives). As individuals grows older, they must constantly negotiate and renegotiate their affiliation with the social category of the age they happen to be at any given time. As such, individuals may struggle with assuming any identity that they wish to claim or that they feel they must claim (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

2.2. Language Learning & Identity

2.2.1. Negotiating Identity in the L2

When we talk, we are continually constructing and negotiating our identities; therefore, it follows that the language one chooses to speak or is able to speak is vital to the process of identity construction. By speaking an L2, a person may be choosing to claim a more complex and satisfying identity (Kinginger, 2004), and can identify with (or take on subject positions with) one or even several speech communities at once (Block, 2007; Norton, 2000). For example, a Canadian French Immersion (FI) student who speaks EL1 may identify simultaneously with the following groups: English speakers around the world, Canadian English speakers, English speakers from the province or territory of residence, French as a second language (FL2) speakers in general, Canadian FL2 speakers, Canadian EL1 speakers who have learned FL2, and Canadians who learned French in FI. Each of these speech communities have specific norms and expectations in order to belong to them, so individuals may see themselves as belonging to any given community if they perceive themselves to be exhibiting these qualities. On the other hand, they may also be perceived by others as belonging to a certain community, and may be labelled as such, whether they choose to identify with

---

7 By highlighting the important role of language in identity construction, I am not implying that identity is not influenced, maintained or demonstrated by non-verbal signals, clothing, gestures, actions, and other visual signs and expressions. I am simply choosing not to address these other elements in this paper.
that community or not. This happened to me often when I lived in France. Whenever I told someone I was Canadian, native French (FL1) speakers would normally automatically assume I was from Quebec, because I was Canadian and I spoke French. Each time I would correct them, because it was important for me to assert that I was not from Quebec, but that I was from Manitoba, and that I was in fact an Anglophone who had learned French in school. I was proud to identify as such: it showed both where I came from, and how hard I had worked to be where I was at that time.

Regardless of how individuals identify or are identified, they will need to negotiate various subject positions within and across speech communities, and this negotiation depends on many factors: their perceived or actual competence in the L1 and L2 (Miller, 2004), who their interlocutors are, their motivation for learning the L2, access to L2 use, whether their L1 or L2 is the majority or minority language in any given location, etcetera. (Hansen Edwards, 2008). The L2 speaker continually navigates subject positions, and when difficulties arise from a certain position, the speaker can “claim alternative identities from which to speak, listen, read or write” with his or her interlocutors (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 415). Indeed, there were times when I relied on such alternative identities, for example the fact that I was an FL2 speaker who had mainly learned French as an adult, so that the native speakers with whom I spoke would not have high expectations for my level of French.

We can clearly see the negotiation and renegotiation of L2 identity across time and space in Marx’s (2002) accounts of developing and manipulating her accent in her L2, German, to signal her identity; and in the experiences of Alice in the process of developing advanced competence in French during her time abroad, in Kinginger’s (2004) qualitative study drawing on the personal narrative of her participant. Alice had many reasons to learn French, including her view of French as a language of culture, and her desire to move beyond the limitations of her low social class and become a French educator. In order to become fluent in French, Alice had to overcome many obstacles, but she believed that being a competent FL2 speaker was a way of reorienting herself in the world. She had to negotiate many aspects—social, linguistic, gender, and class—of her identity on her journey as an FL2 learner. Kinginger found that all of these aspects were closely interconnected and had to be continually negotiated and renegotiated during Alice’s time abroad. Although Alice struggled with the culture and the language at the beginning of her sojourn in France, eventually she became
more confident in her language skills and considered herself the “Queen of France” (sic):
“I would sit around with all my fellow students and we would sit around with our coffee
and our cigarettes and we’d have these long philosophical conversations using big
French words and I was so French” (Kinginger, 2004, p. 236). Nevertheless, for many L2
learners, navigating between speech communities can be a challenge and can lead to
more pronounced division of their identities and internal struggles (Marx, 2002).

2.2.2. L2 Learning & Investment

As an FL2 learner, Alice was quite motivated to gain proficiency in the language,
but language learning is affected by a myriad of factors and requires continuous effort
and focus on the part of the learner (Kinginger, 2004). Alice’s efforts towards her FL2
competence were a signal of her investment in her social identity, as theorized by Norton
(1995, 2000) in her studies of adult EL2 immigrants in Canada. The theory of investment
considers both the language learner and the language-learning context, taking into
account the relationship between the learner and the L2 community in the construction
of one’s social identity. Like more recent trends in social identity research, Norton
believes that language is the basis of the L2 learner’s social identity at various points
across time and space (Norton Peirce, 1995), and the learner’s level of commitment to
learning the L2 is tied to the learner’s perceptions of his or her relationship to the
changing social world. Learners continually reorganize this relationship, and as a result,
their identities, as they invest in the L2 (Dagenais, 2003). When L2 learners speak with
speakers of the L2, they are “constantly organizing and reorganizing the sense of who
they are and how they relate to the social world” (Norton, 2000, p. 50). In other words,
one’s investment in the L2 is also an investment in his or her complex social identity

Another important aspect of investment theory highlights the significance of
power dynamics within relationships (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995), which can
explain why an L2 learner may be reluctant to use the language with native speakers of
the L2, or more competent (from the learner’s perception) L2 users. According to Norton
Peirce (1995), inequitable power structures can impact social interactions between the
L2 learner and his or her native speaker interlocutors. For example, L2 learners may
experience anxiety when speaking with a native speaker of the L2, since from the
learner’s perspective, the native speaker is more competent in the language, and
therefore holds more power over her. Power imbalances also exist in interactions with those in positions of authority over the L2 learner, such as the relationship between professor and student. I myself have experienced anxiety when speaking with my French professors, especially if they are native speakers of the language. During these interactions I am constantly aware of what I am saying and how I am saying it, forming judgments of my own abilities in grammar and pronunciation as I talk. As an FL2 learner, I am highly invested in learning and using the language, but social interactions with FL1 speakers do at times cause me to question my competence in the language. This in turn affects my FL2 identity and how I view myself as an FL2 speaker. My observation aligns with a study done by Saindon, Landry and Boutouchent (2011), who found that the L2 identity of Anglophones who learned French in an academic setting was related to their experiences at school, since the school environment is most closely associated with linguistic competencies. Similarly, Khatib and Ghamari (2011) argue that an L2 learner’s inability to speak the L2 at the same level of competence as the L1 (which is often the case), will affect how the learner views herself or himself as a speaker of the L2, and this could even lead the student to avoid using the L2 in certain contexts.

2.2.3. Willingness to Communicate

This phenomenon, when an L2 speaker who is seemingly competent in the L2 but chooses not to use the language, or when an L2 speaker who has minimal knowledge of the L2 but seems to use the L2 whenever possible, is called willingness to communicate (WTC) (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément & Noels, 1998). Many WTC researchers focus on the individual’s willingness to speak in a given context at a particular time, though others expand the definition to include writing and comprehension of the language (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre et. al., 1998; Jackson, 2008). Like identity, WTC can vary over time and space, depending on many factors: the relationship of the L2 speaker to his or her interlocutors, the number of people involved in the conversation, the subject of conversation, the formality of the situation, and the individual personality of the L2 speaker, including attitudes toward the L2 culture and native speakers, and self-confidence and level of anxiety at a specific time and place (Croucher, 2013; De Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre et al., 1998). According to Lockley (2013), WTC is the main reason for L2 use, “as language learners with a higher degree of WTC are more
active in the L2” (p. 188). In other words, if the person is more willing to use the L2, whether in speaking or writing, she or he will become a more active L2 user, whatever the reason(s) may be. This in turn could lead to more involvement in the L2 speech community.

2.2.4. L2 Learner Identity and the Native Speaker

Researchers generally agree that an L2 learner has the potential to identify with many groups or speech communities, but many argue that regardless of the person’s WTC in the L2, the one identity that the learner cannot truly take on is the identity of native speaker in that language (Cook, 1999; Marx, 2002). The definition of native speaker can vary depending on the researcher. While many believe that “a person is a native speaker of the language learnt first” (Cook, 1999, p. 187), others, including Davies (2004), have argued a more nuanced definition of the native speaker. He states that a native speaker acquires his or her L1 in childhood, but also has intuitions about his or her language’s grammar, has pragmatic control of the language, and has the ability to produce spontaneous and creative utterances both orally and in writing. Therefore, while it may be difficult for a non-native speaker to identify herself or himself as a native speaker because she or he did not learn a language in childhood, it is not entirely impossible to eventually gain the grammatical, social and pragmatic competence of a native speaker, either (even for those learning an L2 in adulthood). Davies says, “The adult non-native speaker can acquire the communicative competence of the native speaker; she/he can acquire the confidence necessary to membership” (Davies, 2004, p. 437).

Not all L2 learners desire to gain native speaker competence though. Some L2 users may choose to retain their L1 accent to preserve their L1 identity and stay connected with their self-concept and linguistic heritage (Deprez, 2008; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Marx, 2002; Moyer, 2013). There can be a sense of conflict between the desire to become more competent in the L2, and the fear of losing ties to the L1 language and culture (Moyer, 2013). This has been the case in many places where the L2 is the majority language of the area, for example in the case of immigrants moving to an English-dominant region of Canada, but can also apply to situations when the L2 is the minority language as well (Saville-Troike, 2012). In her longitudinal study of students living abroad, Jackson (2008) found that some of the participants felt their identity to be
threatened if they drew closer to their host culture. From their perspective, it was a clear distinction of “us” vs. “them.” There is not always an internal identity struggle when learning an L2, however. In a study of 100 adult EL2 learners, Derwing (2003) found that participants generally did not feel as though their identity would be threatened if they could choose to speak English with a native speaker accent, because they still used their L1 regularly and it was their L1 that most clearly expressed their identity.

Further, even those who learn an L2 where it is the minority language may feel as though their identity will be compromised if they speak the L2 like a native speaker. Studies have found that this applies to FL2 learners in Canada in particular, as Anglophone Canadians may choose not to sound like native Canadian French speakers (Francophones) when they speak French, because they do not wish to identify with the Francophone speech community in Canada (Saville-Troike, 2012). Regardless, many studies have concluded that often L2 learners do strive to sound more like native speakers (Derwing & Munro, 2009), but of course this can depend on many factors, including the political or geographical context in which they are learning. L2 learners are more often than not encouraged to strive to speak with a native speaker accent, a feat that proves to be quite difficult, if not nearly impossible for most of them (Beinhoff, 2013; Davies, 2004; Deprez, 2008; Marx, 2002; Pillar, 2002a).

Many researchers question the native speaker construct, as they claim it privileges the “ideal monolingual speaker” (Moyer, 2013, p. 18), which is ultimately an abstract concept of a speaker who is an educated middle-class member of an ideological, homogeneous national community (Cole & Meadows, 2013; Deprez, 2008; Kramsch, 1997; Train, 2007). Davies (2004) states that the concept of the “native speaker” should actually be seen in two ways: linguistically and socially. He explains, “One main type of approach sees the native speaker as the repository and guardian of the true language – this is the linguistic view; the other, the social view, concerns the native speaker as the standard setter” (p.447). Ultimately, he argues, the two views really regard speakers in relation to social groups and their community norms, one example of which is language.

In terms of L2 speakers trying to attain native speaker competence, Cook (1999) argues for the more realistic model of competent L2 user, because language learners should not be expected to have the same level of competence as a monolingual L1
speaker. He argues that L2 learners should instead be viewed as “genuine L2 users, not as imitation native speakers” (Cook, 1999, p. 195). The idea behind this statement is that L2 learners can indeed become competent L2 users in their own right. Rampton (1990) also echoes this sentiment, arguing that the notion of language expertise is fairer to the L2 learner than the native speaker goal, because expertise is learned, relative and partial. It does not require that the L2 user identify with other native speakers of the language, so it “shifts the emphasis from ‘who you are’ to ‘what you know’” (Rampton, 1990, p. 99).

2.3. Competence in the L2

2.3.1. Communicative Competence

When it comes to considering the concept of competence in any language, whether it be one’s L1 or L2, many researchers turn to the notion of communicative competence, explored in the 1970s by Hymes. According to Hymes (1972), competence is the “most general term for the capabilities of a person. […] Competence is dependent upon both (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use” (italics in original, p. 282). He goes on to say that every speaker has innate capacities for communicative competence during his or her early years, and that over time communicative competence develops and changes: “A normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner” (Hymes, 1972, p. 277).

In the 1980s, researchers went on to develop the concept of communicative competence even further: for Canale and Swain (1980), for instance, when developing a communicative approach to teaching a language, there needs to be a distinction between communicative competence and communicative performance, the latter of which concerns the actual realization of the underlying competencies in a language. While one cannot truly measure communicative competence, they argue, one can measure communicative performance, and thus observe communicative competence indirectly. Further, their theory of communicative competence actually considers three
competencies: grammatical competence (including lexical, morphological, syntactic and phonological rules of the language), sociolinguistic competence (including rules for language use and discourse), and strategic competence (including verbal and non-verbal strategies of communication). Together, these competencies form the basis of their theoretical communicative approach, which focuses on "preparing second language learners to exploit—initially through aspects of sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence acquired through experience in communicative use of the first or dominant language—those grammatical features of the second language that are selected on the basis of [...] their grammatical and cognitive complexity, transparency with respect to communicative function, probability of use by native speakers, generalizability to different communicative functions and contexts, and relevance to the learners’ communicative needs in the second language" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 29).

For Riley (2007), communicative competence is just one of three pieces to the competence puzzle, the other two being linguistic competence and sociocultural competence. According to Riley (2007), linguistic competence is the speaker's underlying knowledge of the grammar of a language, communicative competence is the ability to use that grammar appropriately in a given social situation, and sociocultural competence is the ability to bring together the knowledge of a language and the knowledge of the world. To be socioculturally competent in a language, one must know how to fit into his or her society as a member (Riley, 2007). When I look at the question of the competence of French L2 users in this study, I mainly am concerned with communicative competence, although when examining the L2 users’ sense of belonging in a community, it is also vital to consider their sociocultural competence as well.

Communicative competence then, in short, mainly has to do with communicating in a language with other speakers of that language (McCroskey, 1984, Šafranj, 2009). Many L2 speakers believe that in order to be competent in the L2, one must speak with native speaker fluency, however as I explored in the last section, it is unfair to apply this criterion to someone who learns a language later in life, or to someone whose only opportunity to use the language is in a classroom, for example. It is also unfair to expect that a native speaker will possess a perfect communicative competence, as nobody’s command of a language is complete, and speakers will always be more proficient in certain areas of a language than others. Even a native speaker, no matter how well-spoken or well-read, is not immune to this fact (Cole & Meadows, 2003; Rampton,
What it ultimately comes down to is the question of whether the speaker can communicate effectively and appropriately in a social situation (Chambard, 1976; Šafranj, 2009).

### 2.3.2. Self-Perceived Communicative Competence

Certainly, the communicative competence of an L2 user can be evaluated by those around her, and these judgments can no doubt influence the way the L2 user sees herself or himself, however there are many factors involved in the self-perception of one’s communicative competence (SPCC). Over the last 20 years there have been many studies that have focused on experiences of L2 users and how they relate to SPCC, as well the relationship between anxiety, communication apprehension (CA), WTC, and SPCC (Croucher, 2013; Dewaele, 2010a; Lockley, 2013; MacIntyre, Noels & Clément, 1997; Šafranj, 2009). Essentially, SPCC is “a person’s evaluation of his/her ability to communicate [...] with various interlocutors in a wide variety of settings and situations” (Dewaele, 2010a, p. 115). In other words, it involves the person’s own perceptions, which can be positive or negative, and depends on the language, the interlocutor, the social context, and a myriad of other factors (De Saint Léger & Storch, 2009). Generally, researchers have found that when a person speaks a language that is not their L1, it is probable that the person will see herself or himself as less competent in his or her communication (Burroughs, Marie & McCroskey, 2003; Šafranj, 2009). It is important to note that SPCC is not a measure of one’s actual competence in a language, but a measure of one’s perceived competence, which can be vastly different from actual (Šafranj, 2009). Further, an L2 speaker may perceive herself or himself to be more competent in one area of language use than another. These areas include speaking, writing, reading and comprehension, the latter two of which are passive activities, and are generally found to have higher rates of SPCC than the other two (MacIntyre et. al., 1997; Pillar, 2002a; Préfontaine, 2013).

### 2.3.3. Factors Correlated with SPCC

#### Communication Apprehension & Anxiety

Numerous studies have shown that speaking a language other than one’s L1 can cause anxiety and apprehension when it comes time to communicate in that language.
with native speakers (Burroughs et. al., 2003). Generally, it has been found that a negative correlation exists between SPCC and CA and anxiety, whether associated with real or anticipated communication events (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). Many L2 speakers who are apprehensive or anxious when communicating tend to perceive their competence as low and fear being negatively evaluated by L1 speakers (Croucher, 2013; Lockley, 2013; MacIntyre et. al., 1997). It works the other way around, too: a low SPCC can also cause a person to become anxious (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). MacIntyre et. al. (1997) talk about anxiety as it relates to speaking in one’s L2, and how anxiety can prevent L2 users from increasing their communicative competence:

The arousal of anxiety probably makes some students more reluctant to speak. If language learners do not choose to communicate, they cannot re-assess their competence. Thus begins a vicious cycle, wherein the anxiety level remains high because the anxious student does not accept evidence of increasing proficiency that might reduce anxiety. (MacIntyre et. al., 1997, p. 278).

Being an anxious L2 speaker at any given time or in any given context, however, does not necessarily define who you are. The relationship CA and anxiety have with SPCC is complex and dynamic, and can change over time. As an L2 user gains more experience in the L2, their perceived competence can increase overall, and thus their CA and anxiety can decrease (De Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre et. al., 1997). However, if the L2 learner is having a bad day for instance, or is in a social situation where there is a real or perceived imbalance of power, anxiety levels can rise at that time, and she or he may feel less competent in that moment. It should not be forgotten that there can also be positive experiences that relate to SPCC. MacIntyre et. al. (1997) found that self-assessment can enable learning by giving learners strategies for developing their language capabilities and can increase overall competence. There also exist L2 speakers with very little anxiety when they speak. Speakers with low CA and anxiety levels tend to favourably evaluate their abilities in the L2 (Préfontaine, 2013).

**Willingness to Communicate**

The other trend that has been studied since the mid-1990s is the close relation between SPCC and one’s WTC with others in the L2. As discussed in section 2.2.3., WTC is the “probability that an individual will choose to communicate, specifically to talk, when free to do so” (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004, p. 420). WTC can help to explain the
phenomenon of highly competent L2 learners being unwilling to communicate in the L2, while less competent learners with minimal knowledge of the language use the L2 at every opportunity (MacIntyre et. al., 1998). As such, an L2 user may be highly competent in his or her L2, but may not be willing to use it at every available opportunity. Many factors can contribute to WTC: formality of the situation, relationship between the speakers, number of people present, actual or perceived power imbalances, topic of discussion, or mood of the L2 speaker (MacIntyre et. al., 1998). Just like the relationship between CA, anxiety and SPCC, a person’s WTC can change over time and space, and can be influenced by CA and anxiety as well (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre et. al., 1998). Overall, researchers have found that the higher an individual perceives his or her L2 communicative competence to be, the more willing he or she will be to communicate with others in the L2 in a particular setting at a particular time (Croucher, 2013; De Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre et. al., 1998).

2.3.4. SPCC & Identity

Being a competent speaker can open many doors for an L2 user, including the ability and the desire to claim identity with the speech community of one’s L2. The relationship between SPCC and identity is complex because both are ever-evolving and have to do with one’s own perceptions and choices. As Stebbins (2000) states, “For once a person is competent in a language, he or she can choose to claim or reject active membership in the linguistic community that has grown up around it, to identify publicly with it, and even to work for its survival and development” (p. 34). The Korean-American participants in Kang & Kim’s 2012 study faced this very choice. The researchers found that those participants who perceived themselves to be more competent their heritage language, Korean, identified more strongly toward their Korean ethnic identity. Those who saw themselves to be less competent in Korean distanced themselves from their Korean identities (Kang & Kim, 2012).

While not much research has been done around the relationship between SPCC and identity, the studies that have treated this topic have mainly focused on the self-perception of accent and how it relates to identity in the L2. For many L2 speakers, whether one has an accent or not in the L2 can be an important indicator of language learning success (Piller, 2002a), and is thus inextricably linked to how they identify as L2 users. Marx’s 2002 study demonstrates this. Marx, a Canadian English L1 speaker who
spent two years abroad in Germany, desired very strongly to speak German like a native speaker, without a Canadian accent; she believes this is because she wanted German L1 speakers to see her as a fellow competent speaker and member of the culture. In her study, she expresses “delight at not being ‘caught’ as a foreigner when speaking with strangers” (Marx, 2002, p. 272), and says she even went so far as to intentionally speak with a German accent when speaking English upon her return to Canada. For Marx, the desire to be a successful German L2 speaker was strong, and the adoption of a German accent in English was her way of maintaining a foreign identity in her L1 context. Another study by Gluszek et. al. (2011), also examines speaker’s perceptions of accent and their sense of belonging with a particular community. They found that among English L2 speakers in America, the stronger that L2 speakers perceived their foreign accent to be, the less they felt they belonged to the American English-speaking community. Conversely, those who strongly identified with American culture perceived their accents to be weaker. The researchers concluded that “because of communication challenges and stigma, non-natively accented speakers may feel that they are outsiders to the language community and question their social belonging” (Gluszek et. al., 2011, p. 30).

2.3.5. My Experience with SPCC

As a French L2 user and graduate student exploring the topic of SPCC, I have had much time to think and reflect upon my own perceptions of communicative competence in French. In terms of accent, I am aware I have a Canadian English accent when I speak French, although from the start of my university learning career, I have tried to lose it. I mainly try to emulate the pronunciation and speech patterns of a French speaker from France, since most of my professors encouraged a “standard” French pronunciation while I was learning to speak the language. I have had Francophone Canadian professors who admitted to consciously changing their accents to sound more standard in the university teaching context, so naturally I attempted to acquire the accent I was being taught. After spending a semester abroad in France, I found that my command of the language vastly improved. I also acquired some of the prosody and vocabulary of the southwest region. During my time there, almost every French L1 speaker I met commented on my accent. Many said my French accent was good and one person even told me my Canadian accent was cute and that I should not try to sound more French. It seemed that my French learning was always a topic of
conversation. I became very experienced at explaining where I was from and what I was doing there. I had a script of sorts: “Je viens du Canada... non, pas du Québec, je suis de Winnipeg, au centre du pays. Je suis en France pour participer dans un programme d'échange. Je suis ici pendant cinq mois.” Based simply on these sentences, I saw myself as a competent French speaker. Beyond them, I struggled a bit, but by the end of my time there, I had gained more fluency in the language than I had done throughout the five years of my university degree. Of course, this explanation, coupled with my obvious accent, means that I had taken on the identity of foreign exchange student and thus could not consider myself as part of the native speaker community in France. Upon my return to Canada, I considered myself a much more competent FL2 speaker, but I still did not identify with native French speakers, neither here nor there. After my time in France, French speakers here would ask me how I had gotten to the level I had, if I had never been in FL. I attributed my competence in French to both my time in France, and to the time I had spent studying the language in university. I still classified myself as an FL2 user, if not a more competent one.

Even though I am still learning new things about the French language all the time, in my mind, I am overall a competent French L2 user. Inevitably though, I find that I can still experience anxiety when speaking with French L1 speakers. I am extra-conscious of my accent and my shortcomings in the language when I am in these situations. Even after all of the research I have done on L2 acquisition as an adult and native speaker attainment, I still find that I am bothered by the fact that I do not speak French like an L1 speaker, despite the fact that I know it is extremely difficult and rare for an adult to speak his or her L2 like a native speaker (Beinhoff, 2013; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Pillar, 2002a). To be sure, when I have time to think about what I am saying, I can speak well enough, but at times I feel as if I appear incompetent, and am not speaking as one would who has worked so hard to get where I am. At times this means I do not say as much as I would if I were speaking English. My experience echoes that of Huston and Sebbar (1986) in their *Lettres parisiennes*, the former of whom writes, “Je n’ai pas, après tant d’années, réussi à acquérir la souplesse, l’intelligence qui me permettraient la pratique efficace d’un certain nombre de codes sociaux, culturels, mondains, que je connais et qui me précipitent chaque fois dans un mutisme obstiné et stupide” (p. 250).

Overall I can relate to the studies presented above on communication apprehension, willingness to communicate, and self-perceived communicative
competence. Usually when speaking to a French L1 speaker, I am anxious for the first part of the conversation until I become comfortable with the person. With regards to WTC, there are times when I choose not to use my French in the Canadian context, for fear of being labelled as incompetent, or for fear that my interlocutor may assume I am Francophone and start speaking to me about a topic in which I am not well-versed. If this happened, the illusion would be shattered and we would need to revert to communicating in English. I should note though that there are times that I consistently feel competent as a French L2 speaker, namely when I am teaching in university introductory French classes or tutoring clients who want to learn French. In these situations, my role is completely flipped: there I am the instructor and am the more experienced French speaker. Another area that I find my SPCC is more favourable is when the mode of communication is writing. When it comes to CA, WTC and my self-perceived communicative competence, I find that I do not get as anxious or apprehensive and I am more willing to communicate when I am writing in French. When writing, I can take as much time as I need to think about what I would like to express, and how to formulate it, and so the result is a (mostly) polished piece of French language writing. Of course, not all FL2 speakers would echo my sentiments about writing in their L2. In this study, I seek to explore some of the different ways that SPCC influences other FL2 speakers’ CA and WTC, and ultimately their identity.
Chapter 3.

Sociolinguistic Context

3.1. The French Language in Canada

3.1.1. Official Language Status

The French language has been one of Canada's official languages, along with English, since the Official Languages Act was passed in 1969. This policy aimed to give both languages equal status, to promote the vitality of French and English, and to give Anglophones and Francophones in minority situations access to their first language, in particular, for federal services. The subsequent Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 entrenched the rights of both official language communities into the Constitution Act, and ensured that children of both linguistic communities had the right to learn in their language in public school, and that the language groups were able to maintain and transmit their languages and cultures freely (Dagenais, 2013; Deveau et al., 2008; Marshall & La ghzouai, 2012; Roy, 2010; Stebbins, 2000). Together the goal of these federal policies is technically promoting official bilingualism among the Canadian population, but as Roy (2010) points out, the reality is that the policies “promote, not common bilingual communities, but two separate linguistic communities” (Roy, 2010, p. 555).

Today, according to Canadian government statistics, 23.2% of the Canadian population speaks French as a first language (FL1), while 75.1% speaks English as a first language (EL1). Despite its official language status, French is still a minority language in much of the country (with the exception of the province of Quebec, where 87% of Francophones, defined by the government as those who speak FL1, reside) (Government of Canada, 2016a). Many Canadians would in fact say they value national bilingualism, but overall, less than one-fifth of the entire population (17.5%) can speak both official languages. Many of these people, however, are Francophones who have learned to speak English as a second language (EL2): 87% of Francophones outside Quebec and 38.6% of those living in Quebec consider themselves bilingual (Government of Canada, 2016a).
Even though Francophone communities exist in all of the other provinces and territories outside of Quebec, the English language tends to be prevalent both politically and culturally, in both public and private spheres, across Canadian society (Carr, 2013; Landry et. al., 2006; Saindon, Landry & Boutouchent, 2011). For many Francophones outside of Quebec, English is the language in which they must carry out a significant portion of their routine activities, whether that be in the workplace, health care, commerce, or politics (Stebbins, 2000), although as I will explain below, large urban centres like Vancouver, British Columbia (BC) do offer many of these types services in French. These services are part of the bigger concept of *les espaces francophones*, places or networks of “community-like structures” (Stebbins, 2000, p. 26) where Francophones can gather to enjoy relationships in French at home, school, work or in public. Regardless of whether or not there are local services available for Francophones in their L1 though, there can exist tension between the Anglophone and Francophone communities, when one feels it is being dominated by the other. In these cases, the minority language community may feel as though they must protect their language, as has commonly been the situation for the Francophone community over the years. Saindon et. al. (2011) explains that this is the case for the French language, even sometimes in Quebec: “Bien que le Canada soit un pays officiellement bilingue, la protection du français contre la dominance de l’anglais demeure nécessaire même dans la seule province où la grande majorité parle cette langue” (Saindon et. al., 2011, p. 3).

### 3.1.2. The French Language in British Columbia

Francophones began arriving in BC in the late 18th century, but it was not until the early 1900s that the Francophone community of Maillardville was established in what is now the city of Coquitlam, BC (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c; Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2010). Today almost the entire population of Maillardville has been assimilated into the local Anglophone-majority population, and many Francophones have moved to other parts of the province, with over half now living in Vancouver; other parts of the Lower Mainland; and Victoria, the capital, located on Vancouver Island (Roy, 1984; Stebbins, 2000). The Francophone community in BC is made up of both Canadian Francophones and FL1 speakers from around the world, and counts over 70,000 people, a number which
represents 1.6% of the total population of BC (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c; Office of the Premier, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2011).

According to the 2011 census, in the Lower Mainland, where over half of BC’s population lives, the majority of residents (56%) declare their first language to be English, while just under half of the population (40.3%) claim other, non-official languages to be their L1 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Only a mere 1.1% declare their L1 to be French, although of course many more people would say that they are able to speak French alongside English. Those who claim to be bilingual amount to 7.2% of the population of the Lower Mainland (see Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.1. Knowledge of Official Languages, 2011 Census – Lower Mainland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Official Languages</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Only</td>
<td>1,997,605</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Only</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both English &amp; French</td>
<td>164,785</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither English nor French</td>
<td>128,460</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,292,115</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics Canada, 2012

Despite only consisting of a small percentage of the overall population, the Francophone community is very much alive and well in BC. Every year, thousands of French speakers take advantage of many resources, events, concerts, businesses, associations and institutions where the language spoken is French. For BC Francophones, language and cultural activities go hand in hand: “La communauté francophone a son théâtre, ses festivals, ses danseurs, ses musiciens, ses artistes, ses artisans et deux associations historiques” (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c). A list of all things Francophone in BC is compiled annually and published by La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique (FFCB), a provincial organization representing Francophones in BC. According to the
FFCB, their *annuaire* is “un outil de référence pour les francophones et les francophiles à la recherche de produits et services en français. Il représente une belle vitrine pour les entreprises, les associations francophones et l’ensemble de ses annonceurs” (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2013-14). The *annuaire* details events and festivals that occur throughout the year, like the Festival du bois and the Rendez-vous de la francophonie. Arts companies like Théâtre la Seizième showcase live Francophone theatre, and organizations such as La Boussole offers social services in French, specifically supporting Francophones in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016a; La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016b). Thanks to business associations like the Chambre de commerce francophone de Vancouver and the Société de développement économique, Francophone business people can access entrepreneurial training and professional development in many key economic sectors in the province, all in their own language (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c). Educational institutions like the Alliance française de Vancouver and the Bureau des affaires francophones et francophiles, or in English, the Office for Francophone and Francophile Affairs (OFFA), offer French language education by Francophones to non-Francophones. OFFA in particular, located on the Simon Fraser University (SFU) campus in Burnaby, BC, organizes cultural activities and seeks to “develop, coordinate and promote programs and courses taught in French at SFU in order to meet the post-secondary education needs of Francophone and Francophile communities in British Columbia” (Simon Fraser University, n.d., About OFFA). By no means is this list exhaustive, but in sum, all of these events, activities and places seek to promote French language, culture and heritage as represented in BC.

Another important place BC Francophones have access to their language is in public schools. In BC, there are around 40 Francophone schools that are frequented by over 5,000 students. These schools began appearing in 1977, when it became legal for Francophones to run their own schools in the province, and today are run by the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), whose mission it is, among other things, to develop, from a young age, an excellent command of the French language and an appreciation of the Francophone culture (Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, n.d.; La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c; La Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique,
n.d.; Roy, 1984). Any child who has at least one Francophone parent can be accepted into the Francophone school program, even if the child speaks no French at home (Roy, 1984). This makes French education accessible to all those who wish to be taught in their heritage or native language.

3.2. Francophone Identity in Canada

Since the first European explorers started arriving in Canada in the 16th century, the French language has been a fundamental element of the linguistic makeup of Canada (Wernicke & Bournot-Trites, 2011). Today, several hundred years later, French plays an important role in the identity of many Canadians. Strictly speaking, the term “Francophone” simply denotes someone who can speak French understand and speak French well enough to use it in their daily lives. The term therefore is technically not limited to those who happen to speak or have spoken FL1 or to those who speak it at home with their families (Stebbins, 2000). With this in mind, it is not unreasonable that one could be considered Francophone even if she or he learned French as a second language (FL2) later in life, like I myself did. Even the Canadian government does not have one unified definition for the term: in its census, depending on the purpose for the data collection, the federal government considers someone Francophone if she or he has a general knowledge of the French language, or if she or he speaks French at home, or if his or her L1 is French (Boudreau, 2013; Dagenais, 2013; Stebbins, 2000). Of course, these criteria make it possible for FL2 speakers like myself to identify as Francophone. However, the reality is that many FL2 speakers in Canada do not consider themselves Francophone. Why is this?

The answer to this question is complex and multifaceted, or as Stebbins (2000) says, “The linguistic identity of contemporary Canadian Francophones is now more complicated than ever,” (p. 35). For starters, the word “Francophone” itself did not even start emerging in mainstream social consciousness until the 1970s, soon after the Official Languages Act came into being (Boudreau, 2013; Rey, 2007). When looking to the dictionary for the meaning of the word, we find somewhat different definitions depending on the language. In French, the word *francophone* simply means someone who speaks French (Éditions Larousse, n.d., Francophone), while in English, it has the
same definition, only the qualification “especially a native speaker” is added (Dictionary.com, 2017, Francophone). It is no wonder then why Anglophones might have the perception that in order to identify as Francophone one must speak FL1. Further, over the years, Francophones have come to collectively refer to themselves as *la francophonie*, a term that the FFCB defines as a community of people who like to express themselves in French and who live their lives in French (La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c). *La francophonie* is made up of individuals who identify as Francophone, and it is not just language that unites them, but it can also be culture, familial ties, politics and heritage as well. Today, calling oneself a Francophone in Canada can mean many things: speaking FL1, speaking the language well enough to use in daily life, and/or belonging to a group of people with a long, rich history, culture and language (Roy & Galiev, 2011; Saindon et. al., 2011).

Of course, Canadians born into Francophone families but situated in a predominantly English-speaking region of Canada may grow up identifying as both Francophone and Anglophone. Or an individual may, for instance, identify linguistically as bilingual, but ethnically⁸ as Francophone and culturally as Anglophone (Deveau et. al., 2008). This may also change over time and space, depending on the individual’s age and where she or he is living at any given time in her or his life. When it comes to feeling a sense of belonging with the Francophone or Anglophone linguistic groups, or speech communities, Deveau et. al. (2008) illustrates that it is possible to place the sense of belonging on a continuum of sorts, which can range from complete belonging to non-belonging. Thus, on the Francophone continuum, one can feel completely Francophone (full sense of belonging in the Francophone community, or *la francophonie*), or not Francophone at all (not a member of the community), or fall somewhere along the continuum line. From the perspective of social identity theory, for one to identify as a Francophone, she or he must feel a sense of belonging with the Francophone community, however the individual may perceive that community⁹.

—

⁸ The term “ethnicity” can be defined in many ways, but when I talk about ethnic identity in this paper, I have Feuer’s (2013) definition in mind. She defines members of an ethnic group “as identifying based on common genealogy and ancestry and united by shared practices, languages, or culture” (p. 9).

⁹ I use the term “community” here in the broad, general sense of the Francophone linguistic community in Canada, rather than any specific, tangible Francophone community such as Maillardville, BC.
3.2.1. Francophile Identity

Where does this leave FL2 speakers? If they are not willing (or able) to legitimately claim Francophone as an identity, is there another option for them? From the perspective of Francophones in Canada, there is: the identity of Francophile. At its foundation, the French word *francophile* literally means “lover of French”. The Larousse Dictionary defines it as “qui est ami de la France et des Français” (Éditions Larousse, n.d., Francophile). Though the word easily translates into the English word “Francophile”, the term is not well-known among Canadian Anglophones, perhaps because Anglophones who like French cuisine or enjoy visiting France or Quebec may not be inclined to take on an identity by labelling themselves in relation to another culture. However, those who have spent any amount of time learning French in the Canadian context have come across this concept, and have likely been labelled as such by Francophones (Stebbins, 2000). It is not so simple for FL2 learners to take on this identity though, as we will see when we explore this concept more in depth in Chapter 6. Many FL2 speakers have trouble grouping themselves in with those who have an appreciation for French language and culture, and rightly so: many have spent much time and many resources in their commitment to learning the language, its syntax, vocabulary, rhythm, and speech patterns. To reduce that effort to a mere adoration for the French culture in some ways can belittle the learner. This sentiment can be quite strong, as demonstrated in Huston and Sebbar’s letters: “Parce que je ne suis pas francophile. Depuis que je vis en France, je me suis presque fait un point d’honneur de ne pas apprendre à distinguer un Bourgogne d’un Bordeaux, de ne pas connaître le nom de tous les fromages, de ne pas visiter tous les châteaux de la Loire” (Huston & Sebbar, 1986, p. 251). It is precisely this opinion and more that I aim to examine in this study.

3.3. French as a Second Language Education in Canada

3.3.1. French Immersion

Since French is one of Canada’s official languages, there is a strong push across the country for children whose L1 is not French to learn it at some point in their schooling between kindergarten to grade 12. Every province offers some form of basic French
education in public schools, but many schools take it a step further by offering French Immersion (FI). The Canadian FI programme has existed for over 50 years, stemming from the desire for children to not just learn FL2, but to learn it well, and to be able to understand Francophone culture, increasing the dialogue between Canada’s two official language groups (Heffernan, 1996; Roy & Galiev, 2011). Starting in St. Lambert, Quebec in 1965, FI has spread across the country, and now over 1,000,000 Canadians have received their education in French through the programme (Friesen, 2013; Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch, 2016, June 6). The purpose behind FI is additive bilingualism, or adding an L2 without affecting the development of the L1 (Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Essentially, the goal is that children will develop fluency in French, a language unknown to them and possibly their parents, through instruction in the language, rather than explicit instruction of the language (as opposed to many Core French programs, which explicitly teach the grammar and structure of the French language). In other words, in FI, “French is the medium of instruction and not the object of instruction” (Turnbull, Lapkin, Hart & Swain, 1998, p. 33).

By the end of grade 8, it is estimated that a child who started the program in kindergarten will have received between 6,000 and 7,000 hours of exposure to the French language (Hammerly, 1987; Turnbull et. al., 1998). By the time she or he graduates from high school, it is expected that she or he will speak French well enough to use it in everyday life. Being able to speak both of Canada’s official languages can put one at a significant advantage in the job market, so it is not unreasonable that parents are keen to enrol their children in FI programs all across Canada. According to Friesen (2013), FI enrolment has risen 12% since 2006, and this increase is occurring even though the overall number of children enrolled in public schools is declining. Traditionally the demographic of FI programs has been children of middle class, EL1-speaking households, however in more recent years, more and more immigrant parents want their children to participate fully in what it means to be Canadian: that is, fluent in both official languages, so there has been a rise in children who speak languages other than English in FI programs too (Carr, 2013; Dagenais, 2003; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Ultimately, parents who put their children into FI programs see value in “gaining cultural, linguistic, and social wealth and dominance in Canadian society” (Roy & Galiev, 2011, p. 371), as well as the cognitive benefits of stronger listening skills,
greater focus, and a better tolerance for other cultures (Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch, 2016, June 6).

3.3.2. FL2 Education in BC

Enrolment in BC’s FL2 programs is fairly representative of the national trends. At the moment, there are roughly 280,000 students learning FL2 in the province. This includes about 230,000 students in Core French (CF) programs and about 50,000 children in FI programs (Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch, 2016a; La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, 2016c). BC’s Ministry of Education (2013) states that FI’s goal is to provide “opportunity for non-francophone students to become bilingual in English and French” and therefore offers both early (starting in kindergarten) and late (grade 6) start immersion programs. BC is one of two provinces (along with Alberta) where the growth rate in FI has been consistent for the past decade or so, but many believe that if schools had a larger capacity in FI programs the growth rate would be even higher (Friesen, 2013).

After grade 12, students in BC have many choices of post-secondary institutions where they can start or continue learning or studying French either in a classroom setting or online. Besides various adult language education centres, there exist many colleges and universities that offer different French courses and programs to students: Educacentre, Langara College, Capilano University, the University of British Columbia, and of course, SFU, where this study takes place. SFU offers many options for the study of French language or literature and politics and education in French, including a Bachelor of Arts program with major, joint major, minor or honours, a Co-operative Education program, a cohort program with other departments, several certificates and diplomas, and a Master of Arts program (Simon Fraser University, n.d., Undergraduate Programs). As for enrolment, for the 2014–15 school year, there were almost 200 full-time students who had declared either a major, a minor, or some other joint or honours program in French (Simon Fraser University Office of the VP, Academic, 2016).
3.4. FL2 Competence & Identity

3.4.1. Competence in FL2

Overall, it has been found that FI\textsuperscript{10} students exhibit exceptional listening and reading comprehension skills in French, and that FI students do well in learning their school subjects in an L2. Students in FI generally perform very well academically as well (Hammerly, 1987), and with this in mind, along with other advantages listed above, many parents who went through FI themselves are now choosing to enrol their children in FI as well (Friesen, 2013). While many parents, the government, and the public laud the FI programme and its benefits to students (Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch, 2016, June 6; Fraser, 2016; Hammerly, 1987), the programme has been critiqued by many researchers who say that FI does not produce linguistically and sociolinguistically competent French users—so much so that graduates of FI use French very little, and will often call themselves only functionally bilingual (Genesee, 1990; Hammerly, 1987; Roy, 2010). The merits of FI have also been debated in the popular press (Fraser, 2016; Friesen, 2013; Wente, 2016). When it comes to active language skills like speaking and writing the language though, research has shown that FI students have been found to speak French with many errors in their grammar and spelling, with a reduced vocabulary, and with sentence structures closer to English than French (Cohen, 1996; Hammerly, 1987). There are scholars who have argued that FI students develop their own variety of French, along with an accent, dubbed “immersionese” by some (Poljak, 2015; Roy, 2012). There can be many reasons for these shortcomings: a lack of exposure to natural, everyday interactions with FL1 peers; no motivation (or willingness to communicate) to speak or use French outside the classroom; and input from FI teachers who are FL2 speakers themselves and have not fully mastered the language (Cole & Meadows, 2013; Fraser, 2016; Genesee, 1990; Mougeon & Rehner, 2012; Nadasdi, Mougeon & Rehner, 2010; Roy, 2010 & 2012). Heffernan (1996) sums it up by saying:

“While reasonably strong in its language goals, [FI] is relatively weak in terms of its contributions to students’ cultural broadening. […] [I]mmersion youngsters do not listen to more French radio, watch more French television, read more French magazines, newspapers and books or get

\textsuperscript{10} Although more students are enrolled in CF programs across the province, the majority of research available on FL2 education and students in Canada is on the FI programme specifically.
together informally more frequently with Francophones than their predominantly English-educated peers. [...] In fact, most of immersion youngsters’ interaction in French, it appears, goes on in the classroom only.” (Heffernan, 1996, p. 189)

All that said, we must examine the purpose of FI, or any FL2 education model in this country, for that matter. Is the goal of these programs to produce graduates who can speak French at the same competency as FL1 speakers? Many seem to think so. According to Fraser (2016), Genesee (1990), and Roy (2010 & 2012), the expectation exists that students will graduate from FI with a native or near-native fluency in French, and even students themselves may feel like they are falling short when they are unable to speak French like their FL1 counterparts. As discussed in Chapter 2 though, the goal of native speaker attainment is unrealistic and difficult to reach for many L2 speakers, even those who start learning a language at a young age, as in the case of many FI students. Because of this fact, students may “prefer the fallible nonnative-speaker teacher who presents a more achievable model” for them (Cook, 1999, p. 200). The goal of FI, then, if not to produce fully bilingual Canadians, can be rather a stepping stone to further language competency, or as Fraser (2016) puts it, “what immersion does provide is an important building block on which graduates can develop their language skills” (n.p.).

3.4.2. French Immersion & FL2 Identity

As stated above, even after 13 years of being immersed in French language education, many students do not see themselves as being fully bilingual. For many, to be bilingual is to speak both English and French equally well, which for Anglophones means to speak French as well as they can speak English (Roy, 2010). In Roy’s 2010 study on L2 identity among FI students she found that some FI students feel as though their identity is in a third space, in sort of a “middle world between being totally bilingual and being unilingual” (Roy, 2010, p. 554), which distinguishes them from students in the English education stream, who may take CF classes but not experience total immersion in all of their subjects. I explore the concept of third space further in Chapter 7. Yet even though FI students can understand and speak more French compared to their English stream counterparts, they still do not really identify as Francophones either. Roy (2010) found that FI students she interviewed did not quite feel like they belonged to la francophonie, as to be a Francophone one must speak French as a native speaker
would. One person even chose to identify instead first and foremost with other FI
students as a distinct group, by saying, “I am a French Immersion person, my identity is
not with a culture, it is a culture” (Roy, 2010, p. 558).

Much of the way FI students choose to identify has to do with attitudes towards
and perceptions of Francophones. After spending time being exposed to the language
and culture of Francophones at school, in the media, and at home, FI students become
more aware of the differences, tensions and history between Anglophones and
Francophones. Faced with these stories and realities, Anglophones may choose not to
identify themselves with the Francophone community, and instead choose to distance
themselves from it (Asselin, Drapeau, Fortin, LeFebvre, Cedergren, Dumas, Kaye &
Seguin, 1993; Genesee, 1990). In instances where Anglophones are the majority or
dominant group, like in BC for instance, FI students may even choose to not learn FL2
well, as they do not want to be seen as part of the Francophone community. Saville-
Troike (2012) argues that this why many EL1 FI students in high school show limited
acquisition and possibly even regression in French, even after studying the language for
many years. Perceptions of attitudes of FL1 speakers no doubt have an influence on FI
students’ identity as well. Genesee (1990) also says that FI students’ competence in
French not only has to do with their own attitudes towards the French language and
people, but also what they believe the attitudes of French Canadians are towards them.
This can be helpful or hindering to the student, depending on his or her association and
experiences with Francophones, like Coppieters (1987) argues: “A speaker of French is
someone who is accepted as such by the community referred to as that of French
speakers, not someone who is endowed with a specific formal underlying linguistic
system” (p. 565, italics in original).
Chapter 4.

Methodology

4.1. The First-Person Narrative Approach

In my research on communicative competence and second language (L2) identity, I have come across many studies that utilize quantitative methods to collect data from participants, however in the past 20 years, more and more researchers have been changing the way they approach data collection from participants. Instead of using questionnaires, observations and judgments from outside listeners, many now argue that qualitative studies are needed to more fully understand self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC), and identity and its many dynamic and shifting facets (Moyer, 2013; Saville-Troike, 2012). To do so, researchers are employing in-depth interviews, longitudinal studies, analysis of journal entries, ethnographic research, collective stories, and the method I use in this study: first-person narratives. According to Ricento (2005), “These methods have generated a rich source of data and have deepened and widened our understanding of the complexity of identity” (p. 905). The first-person narrative approach can be a powerful method in qualitative research and can reveal much about the human experience that would not necessarily be visible in more traditional types of analysis (Marx, 2002; Webster & Mertova, 2007), or what is referred to as ecological validity (Marx, 2002). Many researchers have already incorporated this type of methodology into their studies, incorporating their own feelings and experiences, or those of their participants (Feuer, 2013; Jackson, 2008; Laneheart, 1996; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000; Pillar, 2002a). In this study, I have chosen to do both.

First-person narrative is a rather new phenomenon in the area of L2 acquisition and identity (Marx, 2002; Webster & Mertova, 2007). This approach allows us to understand the experiences of the L2 learner more intimately than just a questionnaire would. The individual who shares his or her story does so in a complex and changing world, giving his or her listener an in-depth look at who she or he is across time and space (Clandenin & Caine, 2013; Sparkes, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The act of telling one’s story to another is an ordinary occurrence in human communication, but in the context of language learning, it is “un exercice socioculturellement marqué qui se
situe dans un contexte où l’apprenant […] construit ce qu’il/elle définit comme étant son ‘histoire’” (Planchenault, 2013, p. 69). Block (2007) says that there is a natural connection between first-person narration and identity; so much so that identity itself is actually a narration realized and interpreted by the individual in the form of language. It is through the recounting of personal experiences that we get a sense of our identity and others’. This is why it is essential that first-person narrative be given a place in research around L2 identity.

Nevertheless, despite its many merits, this approach is criticized by many scholars, who deem it problematic and do not consider it worthy of being called “proper research,” as there is no way that firsthand accounts can be unbiased (Marx, 2002; Sparkes, 2000). This in essence creates an unfair dichotomy between stories on the one hand, and scholarship on the other (Sparkes, 2000). While it is true that self-reported data like thoughts and perceptions are subjective by nature (Dewaele, 2010b; Dewaele & McCloskey, 2014), and one cannot really generalize findings from these studies that use this approach (Saindon et. al., 2011), we are still able to find value in this type of methodology, and treat each person’s experiences and stories as their own truth, gaining new perspectives, and ultimately broadening our mutual understandings between our stories and theirs.

### 4.2. Method

#### 4.2.1. Participant Recruitment

In November 2015 I did a short presentation in several upper-level French classes at Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) Burnaby campus, in collaboration with instructors, to garner interest in the study. Students heard a brief summary of the project, and were able to take away a document containing information about the study (see Appendix A). Students were told that they would only be able to participate in the study if they spoke French as an additional language, if they had resided in Canada for at least several years, and if they had learned French in the Canadian context.

Seven students contacted me to express interest in participating, and all of them were sent the initial questionnaire and a consent form to fill out. Copies of the consent
form and questionnaire can be found in Appendices B and C, respectively. All of the students met the selection criteria but one chose not to participate, so in total, my study includes six French as a second language (FL2) speakers, all of whom incidentally graduated from a Canadian French Immersion (FI) program. The aim of the questionnaire was to encourage participants to begin thinking about their own language competence, attitudes towards French and French speakers, and motivations for learning and continuing to use French. Questions for the questionnaire were adapted from Gardner’s (2004) questionnaire on motivation and language learning and Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope’s (1986) questionnaire on foreign language classroom anxiety. Completed questionnaires were sent to me prior to meeting for the interviews, so I was able highlight certain responses that I wanted to discuss further during the interviews.

4.2.2. Interviews

In a (2004) study by Ellis, he quotes Wallace Lambert, who researched motivation in the 1950s, as saying that “the best way to learn about someone’s integrative motivation [is] probably to sit quietly and chat with him over a bottle of wine for an evening” (Ellis, 2004, p. 529). I would argue that this statement still applies today in the context of SPCC and L2 identity, so I decided to do just that for the interviews (only we replaced wine with coffee). Between November 2015 and January 2016, I sat down with each participant for a one- to two-hour interview on the SFU Burnaby campus at a location convenient for the participant, either in my office or in a quiet meeting room in the French department. All of the interviews were audio-recorded, but participants were given the option to turn off the audio-recording at any time if they wanted to say something off the record. Participants were given all interview questions (see Appendix D) ahead of time in order to better prepare for the interviews. I tried to make each participant feel at ease by conducting the interviews more like conversations rather than formal interviews, therefore the interview questions were more a general guide for the conversation. Participants always had the option to refuse to answer a question, and I gave the participants the option of following up with me electronically or in person if they wanted to elaborate on any of their responses. I explicitly told participants that they could respond to any question in either English or French or a mixture of both. One participant chose to use a combination of both languages, while the rest used exclusively English in their responses.
The interviews consisted of several categories of questions. Participants were asked about the role of the French language in their lives, their competence in French, and their perceptions of and experiences with Francophones. Overall, the questions were intended to cover several main themes: SPCC in French, self-perception of accent in French, the Anglophone and Francophone communities within and outside of British Columbia (BC), and Francophone and Francophile identity. Most of the participants chose to answer all of the questions. Just before conducting the interviews with participants, I myself took time to reflect on my own answers to my interview questions so that I could later draw on my notes for this study. I also looked back at journal entries I had written during my undergraduate degree and especially during my time abroad in France, in order to catch a glimpse of my thoughts, feelings and firsthand experiences of learning French and perceptions of myself as an FL2 speaker.

Although I did not engage with my participants over an extended period of time, as one would do in a longitudinal study, the questionnaire and interview questions were designed to encourage participants to reflect on how their feelings and perspectives had changed over the years. Given that 1) all participants were enrolled in upper-level university French courses, 2) all had graduated from FI programs, and 3) they had been studying, learning or using French for an average of about 16 years, it was reasonable to conclude that all participants had had a considerable amount of time for their identities in French to be shaped and influenced over a long period of time. In other words, participants had studied French for long enough to reflect on their social, psychological and linguistic identity as a French speaker, specifically in the Canadian, English-dominant context of BC.

4.3. Participants

Overall there were six willing participants who were able to take part in my study. There were commonalities between all of the participants, such as the fact that they all received good grades (mostly A’s and B’s) spoke English as a first language (EL1), and that they had all done FI for at least half of their kindergarten to grade 12 years of education. Of course, each had unique life experiences, backgrounds and histories that
shaped who they were and how they perceived their own competence in French and FL2 identity. I describe each participant below.

4.3.1. Sophie

I interviewed Sophie\textsuperscript{11} in November 2015. Sophie grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba and moved to Vancouver in September of 2014. Her L1 was English but she started learning French in kindergarten in the FI program at her school, and stayed in FI until her graduation from grade 12. After that she undertook a Bachelor of Arts honours degree in French and German at the University of Winnipeg. During and after her undergraduate studies, she lived abroad in both France and Germany and was able to practise her L2s extensively in both places. After working in various bilingual jobs at home and abroad for several years, Sophie decided to return to post-secondary studies to pursue her goal of becoming an FI teacher. At the time of our interview, Sophie was enrolled in SFU’s Programme de formation professionnelle (Professional Development Program), which allows students to take education courses in French, while preparing them to teach in BC.

4.3.2. Hasna

Hasna, whom I interviewed in November 2015, was born in Toronto, Ontario and learned both English and Farsi from a young age. Her parents enrolled her in FI in kindergarten, and she continued in the program even after her move across the country to Vancouver in 2013. After graduating from grade 12, she began the Political Science French Cohort Program at SFU in September of 2014. Students in this program take classes that are mainly taught in French. For her, the decision to pursue post-secondary studies in French was a “no brainer” (Hasna\textsuperscript{12}), as she wanted to find a good job where she could use her French after finishing university. Besides French, Hasna also spoke a little bit of Spanish and Turkish, though she was most competent in English and French overall. Hasna was the only participant who, when given the option to respond to

\textsuperscript{11} Names of all participants are pseudonyms.

\textsuperscript{12} In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, interview excerpts will be cited with participants’ names only.
interview questions in either English or French or a mixture of both, responded in a mixture of both. All other participants used English exclusively.

4.3.3. Allison

My third participant, Allison, also took FI from kindergarten to grade 12. She said she was not sure why her mom put her in the program, but assumed it was because she wanted her daughter to have an advantage over her English program peers. I interviewed Allison in December 2015, and learned she was also taking the Political Science French Cohort Program. Allison had lived in the Lower Mainland her entire life, and was always interested in French and politics, so for her it was a natural decision to enrol in the cohort program at SFU in September 2014. She spoke English as an L1 and French as an L2. She hoped that the cohort program would open doors to bilingual jobs down the road, and wanted to possibly go on pursue a bilingual law degree. Two years prior to our interview, Allison had briefly lived in Quebec for the Explore Program, an intensive summer program that seeks to immerse students in Québécois Francophone language and culture.

4.3.4. Luca

I met Luca for our interview in December 2015. Born in Vancouver to an Italian family, Luca grew up speaking almost exclusively English. He took FI from kindergarten to grade 12, so for all of his grade school years, he focused on learning French; it was not until later on in his life that he started learning Italian. In high school, Luca had the opportunity to live in southern France for a semester, where he was completely immersed in the French language and culture. After high school he moved to Montreal to pursue a science degree, however when he realized that what he really wanted to do was to study French again, he took a year off and then moved back to BC to start at SFU in January 2016. At the time of our interview, Luca was looking forward to starting his Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in French and English. His hope was to use his French in his future career, and/or to one day live in France again.
4.3.5. Benjamin

The fifth participant I interviewed, Benjamin, was born in Ottawa, Ontario, but moved to the Lower Mainland at a very young age. He started FI in grade 1, and took it up until grade 7. After that, he chose to continue school in the English International Baccalaureate program, but kept up his French skills on his own. English was always the main language spoken at home, but Benjamin’s father and sister spoke FL2 as well, so the family would speak some French to each other on a daily basis. Benjamin had never lived in a French-speaking place, but he had visited France a few years prior to our interview in January 2016, and was proactive about using his French there. He had begun his post-secondary studies at SFU in September 2013, and was taking Health Sciences with an extended minor in French. His goal after completing his degree was to continue to use French in his everyday life, and hopefully in his career. Besides French, Benjamin spoke a bit of Spanish.

4.3.6. Eos

My final participant was Eos, whom I also met with in January 2016. Eos was born and raised in the Lower Mainland. She came from a diverse family: her father was Chinese from Hong Kong and her mother was French Canadian by heritage, though she did not speak any French. Eos remembered her grandfather speaking French when she was young, though. After learning some of the language from him and at school in her early years, she decided that she wanted to learn more of it, so in grade 6 she convinced her parents to let her enrol in late FI. At the time of our interview, Eos was in her third year of the Political Science French Cohort Program at SFU, while also volunteering for several French organizations. She had never lived in a French-speaking place, but did visit Quebec for a few days at one point. Her hope was to one day become a French teacher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2(s)</th>
<th>Years Using French</th>
<th>Took FI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French, German</td>
<td>F*=17.5, I**=4</td>
<td>K***-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasna</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>English/Farsi</td>
<td>French, Spanish, Turkish</td>
<td>F=14.5</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>F=14.5</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luca</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French, Italian</td>
<td>F=14</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French, Spanish</td>
<td>F=8.5, I=5</td>
<td>Grades 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eos</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>F=9.5, I=6</td>
<td>Grades 6-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* F = formally (i.e. in school, at university)
** I = informally (i.e. on one’s own, at a job, among friends or acquaintances)
*** K = Kindergarten
Chapter 5.

The Interviews, Part 1: Self-Perceived Communicative Competence in French

What does it mean to learn a language? Trying to belong, to reach a level of competence and fluency so that you can accomplish multiple tasks in multiple situations… Learning any language enriches the individual, beyond “Je m’appelle”. It’s part of the Canadian identity, the expectation to learn French. (Sophie)

Learning a second language (L2) has a profound impact on an individual’s identity. As Sophie noted during her interview, for Anglophones, learning French in particular can be an important aspect to their identities as Canadians. In Chapter 2, I reviewed the research that has been carried out around how L2 learners perceive their own communicative competence and how that self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC) influences identity construction. Now I turn to the interviews I conducted with participants to examine their perspectives, feelings and experiences around SPCC, and explore how SPCC influenced their identities in French as a second language (FL2) specifically. However, before doing this, one must first look at where, when, how and with whom FL2 speakers use the French language. I will begin our consideration of my participants’ interview responses by examining their usage of French at the time of the interviews. In hearing about participants’ stories and experiences, one will be better able to understand how they perceive their own competence, and why they identify as they do.

5.1. Participants’ French Usage

Overall, participants exposed themselves to a wide variety of opportunities to use their French. Since they were all students in French programs at Simon Fraser University (SFU), all of them used French on an almost daily basis in the university context, whether that be actively listening to lectures, talking to instructors or fellow classmates, reading articles, or writing academic papers. For some participants, almost their entire course load was made up of French classes. For instance, almost all of
Hasna’s courses were conducted in French, and therefore felt like she was obligated to speak French in that context: “Quand je parle avec mes enseignants et le personnel de BAFF, je dois parler français” (Hasna). Many participants said they had made friends who spoke FL2 through their classes, but that they mostly spoke to them in either English or in a mixture of both languages. Allison used her French mainly at university, and had friends in her program with whom she would regularly speak French, although she admitted that they would “go between English and French, [speaking] Franglais” (Allison). Luca also used French in the classroom context when speaking to his instructors, though when conversing with his classroom Anglophone peers, he would always use English: “I despise speaking to non-native French speakers in French. It weirds me out. I wouldn’t speak French to my classmates” (Luca).

Most participants had Francophone friends in the Lower Mainland, across Canada (mainly in Quebec and Manitoba), and in Europe with whom they had regular face-to-face or online contact. They used many social media tools to communicate with their Francophone friends, including texting, Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Google Voice. Some friends they had met in class, others from travelling or through local French events. Allison, for example, had befriended several French speakers when she attended a mock youth parliament in Victoria called the Parlement jeunesse with others in her cohort program. There she encountered other French-speaking youth, mainly native French (FL1) speakers, who had been attending the event for several years already and knew each other. She expressed feeling somewhat out of her league, especially with her roommates, who even though they were all “super nice, [were] all native French speakers. They started speaking to me in French, and I could hear their accents. Automatically I was really nervous about what they were thinking” (Allison). All of the participants said it would be nice to have more friends around who spoke French, but that it was not necessary for them. Luca talked about his experience in French Immersion (FI), having other students around who could speak French: “The immersion thing, it was a common experience we shared. It was a huge part of my life. When you can’t empathize with someone on that level, it’s a little stale. I wouldn’t say it’s necessary, but it’s a nice touch” (Luca).

Apart from school-related activities and personal friendships, all of the participants enjoyed activities they could do on their own, like watching French movies, listening to French music, reading French books, and using French in social media
forums like Facebook and Twitter. For Allison, watching movies and listening to music in French was a way not to lose the language while on school breaks. Benjamin set most of his electronics, like his phone and tablet, to French, and liked to read French news from sources like Radio-Canada and Le Monde. Sophie, on the other hand, was more interested in reading French literature “for leisure” (Sophie). Hasna also enjoyed reading French books in her spare time, although she did admit that it took “a lot of mental energy,” so she defaulted to English books more often than not (Hasna).

A few of the participants said they used French at their jobs—not necessarily because they worked in a Francophone workplace, but because they worked or volunteered with FL1 speakers or they encountered FL1 customers or clients on a regular basis. Allison, Eos and Luca all had experience working in service-oriented jobs. Luca expressed his experience with using French at work: “Sometimes I speak to my customers in French at Starbucks. One regular, if I’m feeling especially bold, I will speak to her in French. She has a hearty Parisian accent so she scares me sometimes” (Luca). This discomfort was a common theme among the stories I heard. At times, many of the participants hesitated to consistently use their French when meeting FL1 speakers in public, unless they worked in a French-speaking environment, like Eos for example. She volunteered in several French-speaking places, including Canadian Parents for French in Surrey and French for the Future in Vancouver, and tutored students at her old high school. She said she enjoyed teaching and encouraging French learners to use their French outside the classroom.

In fact, all of the participants admitted they enjoyed using their French outside the classroom when they saw opportunities to do so, though sometimes it depended on the context. For Sophie and Eos, making sure FL1 speakers felt comfortable in minority contexts was important. Eos explained, “When I hear someone speaking French, I will switch right away. Personally I think you should be able to communicate in the language that is most comfortable for you” (Eos). Sophie echoed this sentiment, saying, “I like to ensure that the maximum amount of people feel at ease in a given situation” (Sophie). For Hasna, using French to communicate with her close friend on Facebook was something that she enjoyed doing, because it felt like speaking to each other in a “langue secrète” (Hasna). Benjamin said that he did not really see French as taking up much of his time, as the majority of his life was still lived in English, but he could choose to use French for activities when he so desired. Most of his friends did not speak French,
so he communicated in English with them. Where he was able to use his French was actually at home with his father and sister. All three of them spoke FL2, and enjoyed practising it together at home a little every day. Benjamin was the only participant for whom speaking French was part of his home life. All other participants used French at home for reading, writing and auditory and visual activities, but not with family.

It was interesting to hear that almost none of the participants attended local Francophone events. As discussed in Chapter 3, there are numerous Francophone festivals and cultural events that occur throughout the year in the Lower Mainland. These young people, however, did not really desire to attend them for the most part. Eos said she had attended Rendez-vous de la francophonie (a French festival held in Vancouver every year) a few times, and “a couple [French] concerts, not much else” (Eos). Hasna said that though she “went to Festival du Bois one time, there weren’t actual people there who spoke French, and when I did speak French, they mostly responded in English, except for staff” (Hasna). Sophie, who had recently moved to British Columbia (BC) from Manitoba (which has a larger Francophone population than BC has), had not yet attended any Francophone events in BC, but did say that she rarely attended Francophone events in Manitoba because she “didn’t really belong in Francophone community in Manitoba … Francophone is more a cultural thing [there]” (Sophie). This could possibly explain why my other participants did not choose to attend French-speaking events, because they did not feel that they really had a place at them. I examine this concept more in Chapter 6.

5.2. Experiences Using French

Due to their exposure to the French language both inside and outside of the classroom, the participants in this study had been affected by countless experiences, both positive and negative, with French speakers over the years. Many of the experiences helped to shape participants’ perceptions of themselves and the Francophone community at large. Communication with FL1 speakers had the power to affect the feelings of participants, particularly eliciting feelings of anxiety, nervousness and doubt, contributing to a sense of linguistic insecurity.
5.2.1. Positive Experiences

Both positive and negative experiences with FL1 speakers influenced the way that participants felt about themselves and their competence in French. I heard many stories that highlighted times when they were happy or confident when using French in various contexts. All participants had experiences of FL1 speakers telling them that their accents or their level of French was good. For example, Hasna’s tutor corrector had told her so once or twice, and one of Eos’ instructors mentioned that her French was good at one point. Benjamin said that on a trip to Quebec, restaurant servers said they were impressed with his accent. For Allison, the experience occurred at the restaurant where she worked, when an FL1 woman was speaking English with a strong accent. She was struggling with the debit machine, so Allison switched to French to explain how to use it. At the end of the conversation, the woman said Allison’s accent was good. Luca talked about his year abroad in France, where many people would compliment him on his accent. He recalled one particular time, sitting in his French literature class:

The class was reading aloud from *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. We were all taking turns and the teacher said my name and asked me to read from the book. I read a fair bit, and after, there was silence. ... After class, [my classmates] pulled me aside and said that was amazing, that they had no idea, and I shouldn’t have been as good as I was. It was a surreal moment. I was proud but also happy, and also a little embarrassed. (Luca)

Luca went on to talk about what it was like for him upon returning to his Canadian high school after his sojourn in France. He said, “I had improved so much—I was a beaming beacon of French knowledge. I was correcting the teacher in my head. It maybe only lasted two months [but] I knew I’d gotten somewhere” (Luca).

A few of the participants said that there were times when they had been perceived by FL1 speakers as fellow native speakers of French, albeit briefly. These experiences made them feel especially confident. Sophie said she had passed as a FL1 speaker a few times. When this happened, she said, “It [made] me feel so great! Here, if people mistake me for a native French speaker, it makes me happy. But in France, a couple times I’d mention where I was from, and they got confused! They thought I was Belgian” (Sophie). Allison recounted her experience at a craft fair in Quebec, when a Francophone woman mistook her for a FL1 speaker, assuming she was from Quebec. “It felt nice, I was in the third or fourth week of the [Explore] program, and it gave me a
confidence boost. It’s nice … when you speak, to think about what you’re saying, not how you’re saying it,” (Allison). Finally, Luca explained that he was sometimes taken for a FL1 speaker in class, but that it was not a common occurrence. He said, “Somebody recently referred to me as ‘that French guy.’ They didn’t know me! It must have happened at least once in France, but I think it’s always fairly obvious… you can have them fooled for a few sentences, but that’s it” (Luca).

5.2.2. Negative Experiences

While positive experiences with FL1 speakers elicited confidence and pride in their language abilities, negative experiences evoked feelings of embarrassment, nervousness, anxiety and doubt among participants. All of the participants reported various types of negative experiences when using French. As a person of half-Asian, half-Francophone descent, Eos said she was often taken by people as Asian first and foremost, and this also influenced her interactions with FL1 speakers. She had an off-putting experience with a Francophone barista at a coffee shop when she was visiting Quebec once. She described it in detail to me:

I ordered my drink in French, and she had called out the order to the person working the bar in English, and then the guy stopped and looked at her, asked why she called it out in English. That’s a thing they do, where they call it out in the language it was ordered in, ’cause he heard me order it in French, and she said, “She looks Anglophone,” and so I wondered if that was something everyone was doing [during my time in Quebec], and it was the fact that she said “she looks” rather than “she speaks.” It was a little concerning to me. It was definitely an eye-opener. (Eos)

Sophie reflected on how she felt when one of her professors told her once that she was not a competent French speaker:

I felt so sad. Angry. Cheated. I felt my level of French was actually better than hers. It really hurt… Your spoken and written French are on display. A paper with red on it, OK. Having someone look you in the eye and tell you, that’s hard. You don’t feel validated as a person at all. It affects all of you. When a native speaker makes an error, you chalk it up to misspeaking. When a non-native speaker makes an error, you chalk it up to incompetence, or incapability. (Sophie)

Sometimes interactions with French speakers caused embarrassment, like when Allison once took a professor’s question, “Qu’est-ce que tu deviens?” in the literal sense. She explained why this misunderstanding was embarrassing at the time: “To me, that
means *What are you becoming?*, and I didn’t know that it means *What’s up?*, so I was just staring at her blankly, like, I don’t know what that means. … my friend was nearby to explain to me, luckily” (Allison).

I also heard about many instances of doubt or uncertainty that participants felt when speaking French, especially with FL1 speakers. Allison expressed that even though she was comfortable speaking French most of the time, she was always conscious of what her interlocutors might be thinking of her French. Eos said she felt confident in certain contexts, like in school, but in social situations, she always started to doubt herself. Luca had an experience with a friend from France “who used to tell me I had fairly good accent. He said, ‘Your accent isn’t quite what it used to be.’ It shattered my confidence. He didn’t mean it in a mean way, and I don’t disagree; my accent had disintegrated. I hadn’t spoken [French] for two years” (Luca).

Anxiety and nervousness were also common threads throughout all of the participants’ stories. Every participant told me about times when he or she had felt anxious or nervous when communicating with FL1 speakers. Although Benjamin did not mind asking for clarification when he did not understand something a FL1 speaker was saying, he did say, “You want to make sure you’re saying things properly. Sometimes you’re scared you’re not going to recognize a word they’re using” (Benjamin). Hasna said that there were certain FL1 instructors with whom she felt comfortable speaking, and others with whom she was more nervous that when she spoke French. She also said she was “afraid of making mistakes, making a fool of myself” and, “When I feel anxious, I have trouble speaking French properly, and I guess in those contexts, I feel bad about my French” (Hasna). Eos explained a time when she was being interviewed for *Radio-Canada* during her first year at SFU. She said the interviewer “kept saying the same question in a different way. I felt there was a portion of the question that I was missing, but I thought maybe I was answering the best way I knew how. It turns out she was actually trying to lead me in a specific direction. At that point, I was very nervous. Each time I answered I felt worse and worse” (Eos). Sophie talked about how she felt anxious when communicating with FL1 speakers in professional or academic settings, where she perceived that she was being evaluated: “I feel more anxiety. I feel like I must be on point to prove myself… With native speaker friends, I switch between French and English. I don’t feel anxiety there, it’s within my comfort level” (Sophie). For Allison, it was her interlocutor’s language background that caused her nervousness. She said she
was always “more nervous with native speakers from France. Their language is a little more elegant. In Quebec, they use more *anglicismes.* ... The higher the person is—their social standing—depending on context, I get more nervous, like profs, *directeurs,* et cetera.” (Allison). Allison further explained her comment about professors later:

In a group setting, or in class, if I’m answering a question, I’ve thought about the answer, so I’m not quite so anxious. I’m most anxious during office hours. I get a different vibe from my poli sci profs. French profs know you’re working on your French. If you’re not speaking the language properly [with poli sci profs], it reflects poorly on you. It’s not true really; you can be a brilliant person, but I always want to sound professional, to know what I’m talking about. It’s something I’m always nervous about. (Allison)

Lastly, Luca explained how his anxiety changed depending on whether he was in France or Quebec:

In France, I had a good experience... It was nerve-racking at first, but I got into the zone quickly. People were very nice, very welcoming. In Montreal people were nice, but it was a much different experience. It was anxiety-ridden, horrifying. Everyone is bilingual, so you were worried they were going to deem you incompetent in French and switch to English. It was scary, frightening. (Luca)

### 5.3. Self-Perceptions of Competence

When I asked how satisfied they were with their level of French, answers ranged from not at all satisfied to very satisfied. Regardless of how they answered, however, all of the participants wished they could be better, more competent French speakers. Sophie, Allison and Hasna all expressed that they were fairly satisfied with their current level of French. Sophie said that she was “pleased with [her]self. But I will never be fully satisfied with myself until I attain the unattainable goal of native speaker fluency. ... I am satisfied but not excelling. Unless I start my life over as a French speaker” (Sophie).

Allison echoed these sentiments, saying, “I’m satisfied, but I know I could do better. I still get nervous speaking in French. I’m a lot more comfortable in front a classroom in English than in French... There’s lots of room for improvement, but I’d still say I’m fluent” (Allison). Similarly, Hasna explained, “I’m somewhat satisfied. I think I could do more to improve myself... Je me sens assez compétente d’avoir une conversation avec quelqu’un en français—peut-être pas avec un francophone natif, mais je pense que ...”
get by somehow” (Hasna). Eos on the other hand, said she was not happy with her level of French because she wanted to become more competent. She remarked, “I’m at a comfortable place, but I do want to get better. I know I have a lot I want to work on” (Eos). Luca stressed that he was unhappy with his level of French. He described his perception of his competence like this:

Do I feel like I’m at a level of proficiency someone should be after studying a language for 15 years? Absolutely not. Speaking has always been tough for me, so I’m self-conscious when I try to speak French. ... There are two different ways of looking at it: what pros tell me, and what I tell myself. My pros tell me I’m proficient; they give me good grades. When I look at myself, and analyze my own competence, sometimes I’m not so sure I agree. (Luca)

He went on to talk about the frustration he felt with his competence (or lack thereof) in French. He said, “No matter what you do, you’ll never be good enough. You’ll always have an accent, and you’ll never really know what is right or wrong” (Luca). Out of all six participants, Benjamin was the only one who was happy with his level of French, especially when he felt he had more time to think about what he wanted to say. He stated, “I’m quite satisfied. There’s always room for improvement, but given the context, I’m quite happy with the level of French I’ve been able to develop” (Benjamin).

Despite some dissatisfaction with their level of French in general, it seemed that overall, the participants were very satisfied with their French usage in the university context, which was of course the area where they had the most opportunity to use the language. In particular, Sophie, Benjamin and Allison expressed pride in their ability to use their French to write academic papers. Benjamin said that in high school he once “had to do a travail écrit indépendant, and I did really well on my assignment. I was proud that I could do a writing task in French that I’d never done before” (Benjamin). Allison also talked about a time that she was happy with her French writing abilities: “We got one of our biggest assignments back for the semester. This has been my hardest course. [The instructor] does this thing where if you make five mistakes—genre, orthographe, et cetera—you get zero. I was really conscious of that. I got 100% though, so I’m pretty confident of it” (Allison).

Another area where the participants felt generally more satisfied with their competence was when they were communicating with other FL2 speakers. Both Benjamin and Sophie said they felt more competent when speaking with other French
learners, because, according to Benjamin, other FL2 speakers may not realize if he made mistakes. For Sophie, it was a matter of feeling like she had the “upper hand.” She went on to say, “I’m not as intimidated. Even with professors sometimes I can hear mistakes…. I check myself less, and I check them more. The intimidation factor is less because I know where they are coming from” (Sophie). While Allison said she admired FL2 speakers with more experience than her, Eos stated that she felt more competent if she was conversing with someone with less FL2 experience. Firstly, Allison said,

Normally I feel totally fine and confident and I can be myself. The occasional mistake doesn’t matter. For someone with more experience than me—in my program, there are a couple of people—I find their accents are better. Not necessarily their grammar or vocab, it’s definitely the way they speak. I admire them. I compare more than I should. (Allison)

Eos on the other hand, said, “It depends on who it is. There are specific people in my class that I feel more conscious around, because I know they are further along in their studies than I am” (Eos).

Nevertheless, most of the participants were largely keenly aware of trying to use “good” or “proper” grammar when using French, though they admitted that it was much easier to do when writing. Allison said that when speaking, she would do her best to “use proper grammar. Often if I conjugate something incorrectly, I go back and correct myself. Leaving a mistake lingering really bothers me,” she said. When she would write though, she would “try to use different varieties of conjugations, [and] try to take more time to use right grammar” (Allison). Hasna also said she tried to correct herself if she made mistakes when speaking to someone in French, stating, “Souvent quand je parle le français, on utilise les mots plus simples. Comme, j’essaie de parler, [et] si je fais des fautes de grammaire, j’essaie de les corriger…. C’est particulièrement difficile quand je suis fatiguée,” (Hasna). Luca and Benjamin also said they try to use good grammar, and Benjamin clarified that he even tried to use better grammar in French than in English. He said, “I want to prove to myself I can speak French very well. It’s a little more conscious, and I try to say things right, whereas in English I don’t really care as much. I know I’m being understood” (Benjamin). Eos and Sophie also touched on the idea of being conscious of speaking French well. Eos said she did not always think about how she spoke French, saying, “I don’t really have a filter” (Eos). Sophie explained that she thought about it “less and less as I become more and more my own person within the
language sphere” (Sophie). In the classroom during her practical component for her program, for instance, she would sometimes inadvertently say something her students did not understand, and so would have to insert an error (or anglicisme) in order for them to understand. She said, “In a French Immersion setting, you need to speak at their level. It’s limiting sometimes” (Sophie).

5.3.1. Self-Perceptions of Accent

An important part of participants’ SPCC was how they perceived their own accents in French. There were many factors involved in shaping self-perception of accent: one being participants’ experiences with FL1 interlocutors. All of the participants were aware that they had some sort of accent when they spoke French—in some contexts more than others—although they all (with the exception of Benjamin) tried actively not to have one. Hasna, for instance, said that she tried to speak with a more Canadian accent, so she perceived herself to have more of an accent when she was speaking with French people from France. However, she did not know if her accent was “un vraiment bon accent canadien” (Hasna). Both Eos and Allison talked about the stigma that comes with having an accent in one’s L2. Eos said, “I feel like I’m shedding [my accent] more and more every day. I have past recordings. … Mainly I just want to be consistent with my accent. … I like to sound like I know what I’m saying. There’s lots of stigma attached to accents” (Eos). Allison echoed this sentiment by saying, “There’s stigma around having an accent, although there shouldn’t be. If you are trying to speak a language, you’re at least trying, right? I have an English accent when I speak French, though I don’t want one. But I think it’s kind of inevitable. When I compare myself to some people who speak French, … I know it’s not the worst it could be” (Allison). She went on to talk about her experience with Francophones in Quebec: “I would speak French in Quebec cafés, they would hear my accent and they would switch to English. It made me feel less confident about my French. They could still tell it was not my first language. It was frustrating for me” (Allison). Sophie and Luca shared their thoughts on how their accents did not quite fit the mold of any type of accent, and thus influenced their identity. Sophie explained, “When I go to France, I sound like I’m from elsewhere. When I am in Canada, I sound like I’m from elsewhere. When I talk to immersion students, I sound like I’m from elsewhere. The fact is that my accent places me in a
category in which I only belong to the group of non-native speakers” (Sophie). Luca stated that it bothered him to have an accent, saying,

Over the years, I’ve tried to mask it. In France, they told me that I didn’t have an accent, or that I did, but it was strange and they didn’t know where it was from. It was not a Canadian accent, or an English accent. It’s very evident when I hear it played over in my head. That’s the main reason why I don’t feel comfortable speaking. You just will never really know, never have complete confidence. I hate that. (Luca)

Even Benjamin, who was quite happy with his accent, could not really identify what type of accent he had. He said that he thought he had “a decent sounding French accent. I don’t really know what type of French accent I have, probably more towards the Quebec French accent… I think I sound fairly native” (Benjamin).

All of the participants stated that it was important for them to have a native accent in French, though most knew this was a difficult goal to attain. Luca described native speaker accent attainment as “forbidden fruit” (Luca), while Sophie said she was actively “striving to make it less important” in her life (Sophie). Allison acknowledged the challenges in attaining the goal of sounding like a native speaker, but was still hopeful that her accent would improve after spending a year abroad in a French-speaking country the following year. Her goal, she said, was that she wanted people to listen to her and “not be able to tell that [her] first language is English” (Allison).

5.3.2. My Experience

As I interviewed my six participants, I could not help but notice how similar my experiences using FL2 were to theirs. Firstly, I too use French mainly in the academic context, and have done so since I started learning the language. Of course this changed when I lived in France for that brief time in my life, but for the most part, if I do not intentionally expose myself to French media and literature outside of the classroom, the only place I currently encounter French speakers is at university in the French department. Even this has changed though, now that I am finished my graduate studies coursework, as I no longer sit in French class or read French articles for school on a weekly basis. I have a few friends with whom I speak or write in French, however I am really only in contact with them several times per year. Currently I rarely use French in my daily life, even though if anyone asked me, I would still say I speak the language fairly fluently, as I am aware that there are ebbs and flows with using it. This lack of
regular, daily exposure to FL1 speakers though could be one reason why I tend to feel nervous for the first few moments leading up to and during a conversation with an FL1 speaker. What it comes down to is this: the less amount of time one spends practising a skill, the more nervous one can be when attempting to use the skill.

There are times when I let opportunities to use my French pass me by, for fear of sounding incompetent. On several occasions when visiting Montreal, for instance, I used only French intermittently because I was afraid that if I did, and people responded in French but spoke too fast for me to understand, then I would appear incompetent. Speaking English was much easier, and it was possible to do so because most people in Montreal are bilingual. In France, on the other hand, I spoke as much French as I could, since I was there to learn French, after all, and most people do not speak fluent English. FL1 speakers there are quick to correct each other when one makes a mistake, and I was not immune to this practice either. Once I was ordering a hot beverage at a café in Bordeaux, waiting to board a train. I wanted to ask for a lid for the cup, and so I asked for a *couverture* (which unfortunately means “blanket”), to which the barista retorted, “Ah, vous voudriez un couvercle.” I felt embarrassed for saying the wrong word, so I sheepishly took the lid and walked away. Another time, I told my FL1 friend that I was planning on putting my mini fridge by the window in my dorm room, however in French, if you say you want to put something *par la fenêtre*, you are really saying you want to throw it *out* of the window, so we had a good laugh about it. I felt slightly embarrassed but not really incompetent for making a mistake like this, since I was with a very understanding friend, and she was helping me immensely to improve my French.

As stated in Chapter 2, there have been numerous times that FL1 speakers have told me my accent or my French-speaking abilities are very good. This happened several times in France, as well as on my travels when I have encountered other French speakers. When I have these positive experiences, I feel like all of my hard work to learn an L2 has been worthwhile. My professors over the years have been very encouraging in this manner as well. I also feel especially confident in French when I am in front of a class of FL2 beginners, or when I am tutoring clients. I believe that this is partly because I am able to put into practice all that I have learned about French grammar and pronunciation, and transmit my knowledge to my students or clients. In these situations, I feel like I am more of a competent French user than a French learner.
Despite the compliments though, I am still somewhat dissatisfied with my accent and my overall level of French. I know I could get better if I really tried, but at this point in my French learning journey, I feel as though I have plateaued, which I suppose is not necessarily a negative thing, as I do view myself as a fairly competent FL2 user. I have gotten quite far in my mastery of the French language, especially when it comes to writing and aural comprehension, and I acknowledge that I have worked very hard to get to where I am today. I believe that mainly learning French in university has actually helped me to be more conscious of my pronunciation, rhythm, prosody, and other speech patterns in the language. With regards to accent, when I speak I try to emulate a French speaker from France. I think this is because I spent a semester abroad, and I have not spent very much time in Quebec or interacting with French Canadian speakers. Many of my Canadian professors in university even changed their accents to sound more “standard,” which I perceived to be closer to a French accent from France. When I have time to think about what I am going to say, I believe I speak better French. I also have mixed feelings about my accent. At times it bothers me, but logically I know it is very difficult to speak an L2 without traces of one’s L1 showing through. I wish I could be more fluent, and I wish that speaking the language came more naturally to me. The main issue at the moment is that unfortunately I do not use the language enough to have opportunity to improve.
Chapter 6.

The Interviews, Part II: French as a Second Language

Identity

For me, identity is having different clothes to wear, and sometimes there is clothing you didn’t even know existed. (Hasna)

As the excerpt from Hasna’s interview illustrates, those who speak additional languages can face challenges when considering how they identify with regards to different linguistic, cultural and ethnic communities. She went on to say,

It’s really complicated for me… you’re exposed to so many different cultures, identity becomes superfluous to you. It’s sort of harder, you’re kind of less grounded in any solid identity. When you become multicultural like that, you’re forced to be kind of like more of an individual than part of community, because by virtue of being exposed to different cultures … you move away from another particular culture. … You start to identify with them, say for like my Anglophone, my Farsi friends: outside of school they don’t really speak French ... I identify myself as an outsider ... Because I was always sort of the isolated person, personally in school, and then when I’m with other people I often feel different from them, because I share this language and culture that they don’t share. (Hasna)

For Hasna, one of the challenges of identifying with several language groups or cultures meant that when she was with any given group of friends, she felt more like an outsider than an insider, because of the other languages she spoke. She felt torn, finding it difficult to feel a sense of belonging to any specific community. In essence, Hasna had to continually renegotiate her social identity, which changed over time and space, and as we will see, many of the other participants told stories of this struggle as well. Marx explored this renegotiation of the self in depth in her 2002 self-reflective study, explaining, “Because a person may affiliate himself with more than one culture or language, it is possible to hold multiple identities, and these dynamic identities must in some way be reconciled within one unified self in order to maintain this self across boundaries” (p. 266). Being able to speak English, French and Farsi made Hasna who she was: a multilingual individual, however when it came to identifying with or belonging to these linguistic communities as groups of speakers, she found this more challenging and complicated.
6.1. Belonging to a Given Community

During the interviews I explored concepts of belonging to a given linguistic, or speech, community with the participants. Mainly our discussions revolved around their perceptions, thoughts and feelings towards the Anglophone and Francophone communities in British Columbia (BC) and Canada at large. Firstly, I asked them what it meant to feel a sense of belonging with a group or community. Their answers, not unlike Tajfel's (1981) and Turner's (1982) definitions, included explanations like: “To feel like you’re one of them without them thinking that you’re not. … You know you belong when you’re not worried that you are going to get kicked out, or that you don’t belong” (Luca); “It’s feeling comfortable with the group you’re in… where you can practise the culture you want to without feeling judged” (Allison); “Accepting me into the group. Usually I join it, I don’t form the group. … [There’s] some sort of commonality, common interest, you all have accepted each other” (Eos); and finally, “You share similar goals. Desires, characteristics, values, and language is a big part of it too. It’s hard to identify with a community if you can’t communicate with them” (Benjamin). One of the overall themes that emerged from the participants’ answers then were that one must be (or at least perceive to be) accepted into a group in order to belong in the group. There must also be a sense of comfort present towards belonging in the group; if one feels anxious or worried when around other members, he or she may not feel a strong sense of belonging. The other important element that Benjamin touched on was the common characteristics between those in a given group or community. A shared language is of course one such characteristic, but is speaking a language enough to feel a sense of belonging in that language community? Allison talked about the shared language experience that one of her fellow Francophone classmates had: “There’s a guy in my program with a good group of friends in the Conseil jeunesse. They all get along and have a similar background, and because French isn’t spoken widely across Vancouver, together they can speak French and never feel they’re missing part of their culture” (Allison). To Allison, shared culture, along with shared language, was an important facet of belonging to a language group.
6.2. Francophone Identity

What does it mean to be a Francophone? What does it mean to be part of the Francophone community? Participants had many thoughts in response to these questions. First we talked about the general term “Francophone” and then we broadened the concept to the BC and greater Canadian context.

6.2.1. Who is Francophone?

In Chapter 3, I mentioned that one of the Canadian Government’s definitions of the term “Francophone” is someone whose first or native language (L1) is French (Government of Canada, 2016a). The dictionary, on the other hand, simply defines a Francophone as someone who speaks French (Éditions Larousse, n.d., Francophone). However, as I found from listening to the stories and experiences of my participants, to them, the term denoted a distinct group of people whose membership could be complex, fluid and at times confusing. From the participants’ perspectives, there was no easy answer to the question “Who is Francophone?”

To almost all of my six participants, a Francophone person was first and foremost someone who spoke French as a first language (FL1). When asked what he thought of when he heard the term “Francophone,” Benjamin said, “I think of somebody who speaks French as a first language, who lives in that environment. Or lived there at some point. Or lives in an area of the world where French is the predominant language” (Benjamin). Sophie pictured those who spoke FL1 and who also lived in her native Manitoba, those called Franco-Manitobains. To Allison, it was solely a question of language. She said that a Francophone was someone who was a “first language speaker. … They could also speak English, but still be Francophone,” but admitted that the person could “make it more or less about the culture” as well (Allison). Luca echoed the importance of culture when applying the term Francophone: “It’s a very specific word. It’s strange, it’s not well used in English; it’s more common in French. It’s more of an identity, a whole community. Literally, it’s a language, but it’s hard to be a French speaker without the weighty culture that comes with it. They’re interconnected, historically” (Luca). Hasna also talked about the interconnectedness of language and culture among Francophones, but in the end, the concept of Francophone left her with more questions than answers. She explained,
C’est un terme un peu confusant pour moi, parce que qui est francophone ? Mes amis, du Conseil scolaire francophone, sont considérés techniquement francophone, mais leur français—une personne que je connais, son français est comme la merde. ... Francophone also implies a culture. ... What is a francophone culture in the first place? Is there more than just speaking it? If you speak French as a second language, are you considered Francophone or not? (Hasna)

Eos was the only participant who insisted that to be Francophone one simply had to be able to speak the language, though it also required effort on the part of the speaker. She said, “For me, it’s people who actively go out of their way and try to build a community that happens to be in French, in a minority setting. For me it’s a linguistics question, not a background thing,” (Eos). Eos considered herself Francophone, not necessarily because of her French heritage, but because she could speak the language well. This was despite the fact that her first language was not French, and other French speakers did not always think of her as Francophone because of her Asian appearance. She admitted that culture was also integral to the definition of Francophone, stating, “Obviously part of it is the cultural component, which I find ironic because even though we don’t speak it at home, the culture component is still there, very much alive, because I’m half French, but we don’t speak it. So people will see how you look, and I won’t advertise that I’m half French ’cause that’s a weird thing to do” (Eos).

6.2.2. The Francophone Community in Canada

From the participants’ perspectives, the community of Francophones in BC was made up of people with specific shared characteristics: mainly language and culture, though some participants made a point of saying that they did not know much about the province’s Francophone community, and that they rarely felt the presence of the group. Some mentioned Maillardville, the province’s original French settlement and present-day community located in Coquitlam, but their knowledge of the community was quite limited. Luca stated that he did not know a lot about FL1 speakers in BC, saying “It’s not very in your face here. Rarely have I even met people who speak French here” (Luca). Benjamin gave his definition of community as “a bunch of people in close proximity to each other” (Benjamin). Despite the French-speaking community of Maillardville being Francophone, he said, “I don’t really know that I’d know where to begin with that. I’ve never had any interaction with the Francophone community here” (Benjamin). Hasna’s definition of the Francophone community was quite narrow. When asked who she
thought of when she heard about Francophones in BC, she said she thought about “white people. Probably the most Francophone event I’ve ever been to is old: the Centre culturel de Maillardville, an old people place. It’s a very particular subset of people” (Hasna). Eos, on the other hand, had a broader definition of the Francophone community in BC, thanks to her involvement in French volunteering activities. Among those she considered to be part of the Francophone community were the many FL1 speakers who had moved to BC from others parts of Canada and France, but she also made sure to include French as a second language (FL2) speakers and French Immersion (FI) students becoming more involved and taking part in the community. She said that all of these people were “putting themselves out there, trying to enrich our Francophone community” (Eos).

When asked about who made up the larger Francophone community in Canada, many participants pointed to the various provincial Francophone groups like Québecois in Quebec, Fransaskois in Saskatchewan, Franco-Manitobains in Manitoba, Franco-Ontariens in Ontario, and Acadiens in New Brunswick. In other words, the participants thought of “people who speak French, who have grown up in a French-speaking environment” (Benjamin). From Eos’ point of view though, each community was distinct and separate from the other provinces’ communities. She said, “I think there isn’t one pan-Canadian Francophone identity. It depends on where you live and the circumstances you’ve been through. It would definitely be people with French as a first language. The culture varies between provinces. It’s more linguistic to me” (Eos).

Therefore according to my participants, the Francophone community in BC was unique and distinct from, say, the Francophone community in Manitoba. The community was defined not only by the language they spoke, but the culture and the geographical location they shared as well.

6.3. Francophone vs. Francophile Identity

One word that students who are studying French hear a lot in the classroom is the word francophile: a French term whose English counterpart, “Francophile,” is less seldom used. As mentioned in Chapter 3, francophile literally means “lover of French” (Éditions Larousse, n.d., Francophile), however, many Francophones in the Canadian
context tend to use the word to refer to those learning French. This label may not be very welcome to those who have studied French for a considerable amount of time, though. Eos, for example, detailed her experience when the term was applied to her by other French speakers in a professional context, and the feelings it produced. She said, "It brings up interesting feelings. Lately, I've gone out of my way to work really hard at my French... I've worked hard at the business-y side of it, so when I'm conversing with people from government institutions, and they say, ‘Francophiles like yourself’ instead of "Francophones,” it hurts. It’s very—out—I'm trying so hard!” (Eos).

For many FL2 students like my participants, their understanding of Francophile includes those who enjoy not only the French language but also French culture, cuisine, music, films, and more. Luca, Eos and Hasna all mentioned this in their definition of Francophile. Allison, Sophie, Luca and Benjamin went further to include that a Francophile was someone who did not speak FL1, but who was actively engaged in learning FL2. For Allison, it was “someone whose first language is not French, but who speaks French” (Allison). Sophie said she thought of French learners, or “people like me who are trying. Or other friends or people you know who like or are learning French. … I think of someone who is learning actively, eagerly pursuing more” (Sophie). Benjamin said, “To me that means somebody who likes the language, or culture associated with it, … but whose first language isn’t French, or who isn’t Francophone. But they like, or are drawn to French” (Benjamin). Finally, to Luca, the term was in opposition to the concept of Francophone. He described Francophiles as “mostly people like me, studying it, interested in it, who care about it, but can’t really claim Francophone as our identity” (Luca).

This phrase “our identity” is key here. Luca clearly grouped himself in with others who speak FL2 and who appreciate learning the French language and taking part in French cultural activities in various capacities. These individuals do not truly identify as Francophones, but they do not consistently identify as Francophiles, either. My participants had mixed feelings about labelling themselves as Francophiles. Luca and Allison both said they would identify themselves as Francophiles, but Allison qualified that statement by saying that being a Francophile depended on “how you want to make yourself involved in French culture.” She said that as a Francophile, she could get more involved in local Francophone events, but that it was not a priority for her. Sophie explained that she may have once identified as Francophile, but she now felt she had
moved on, as she had reached a level of competence that was higher than some of her peers and the students in high school who she taught for her practical component. She also said that while she still appreciated the language, she had lost some of her enthusiasm for learning it.

Both Hasna and Eos said that neither would describe themselves as being Francophiles, and Eos in particular had strong feelings towards the term. She explained, “I think it’s a term used from derision, from a place that is not very happy. I understand the literal meaning is someone who likes French or things from France, but that doesn’t really describe how I feel. I like the French language, but there’s more to it than that. It’s always been applied to me in a negative way” (Eos). Because of this, Eos preferred to identify as Francophone: “I would try to identify myself as Francophone, because of the way ‘Francophile’ has been applied to me. It’s been mean-spirited, and I want to get out of that, but maybe I’m overreacting, because it shouldn’t be that bad” (Eos).

When I embarked on this research project, one of my theories was that there could exist an FL2 identity continuum, with Francophone on one end and Francophile on the other (see Figure 6.1). I hypothesized that FL2 speakers could potentially place themselves on one end of the continuum or the other, or somewhere in the middle. For example, I would have no problem placing myself on the continuum near the middle but closer to Francophile, because I have considered myself Francophile since I started studying French in university. I know that one can be a Francophile without speaking or understanding the French language, but can still appreciate the culture. I myself am an appreciator of both the language and the culture of France (and to a degree, Quebec), and I speak and understand the language as well. Therefore, I am more than just a Francophile, but not quite a Francophone, either.

Figure 6.1. Hypothetical FL2 Identity Continuum

![Hypothetical FL2 Identity Continuum](image-url)
What I found during the course of the study, however, was that most of the participants had difficulty placing themselves on my proposed continuum. Either neither label really resonated with them, or else one term or the other would resonate more but only partially. Many simply attempted to create their own labels to avoid the two I had suggested. In all cases, each participant had their own reasoning for this, which included personal experiences, feelings, and perceptions of Francophones. I explain each participant’s views in detail below.

6.3.1. Sophie

If given the choice between identifying as Francophone or Francophile, Sophie said she would choose Francophile, but not entirely, since she had surpassed that stage long ago while still in FI. Reflecting on that time in her life, she said that she had “gone through the steps. Francophile means love, eagerness, passion. It’s felt individually. It doesn’t just mean you are taking a French class” (Sophie). To be a Francophile according to Sophie, then, one had to have appreciation for the language and culture; it went beyond simply learning French. Students in FI may be learning and using the language without ever enjoying it. When I asked about the students with whom she worked for her practical component of her program, she hesitated to place them on the continuum: “If I had to put them in one category, it would be Francophile, but since they are actively pursuing French in their studies, I’d put them in a block below—French learner. … Not all of them are eagerly pursuing growth” (Sophie). Clearly, motivation for learning the language was important to Sophie. As a former FI student pursuing a degree to become a FI teacher, Sophie was quite passionate about French language and culture, and transmitting them to her future students, which is why she felt she could partially but not fully identify with the term Francophile anymore.

6.3.2. Hasna

When thinking about her identity as a French speaker, Hasna said that she would not identify as Francophone or Francophile. To her, speaking French was something she did, not something she was.

H: I learned to speak the French language, but I don’t identify with the culture. My friend, even though he considers—he speaks
French very well—he says he’d never consider himself part of the Francophone culture.

J\textsuperscript{13}: Both are cultures?

H: Francophone is more of an identity, but for me, speaking French isn’t an identity, it’s just something I do.

J: Would you come up with your own identity or way of placing yourself on the continuum?

H: I’m somewhere in the middle on the scale. I would identify more as a polyglot. It’s not only French I speak, I also speak Persian, and a bit of Spanish.

Hasna’s ability to speak several languages caused her to describe herself as a polyglot rather than as solely a French speaker. She had no real reason to place herself on my hypothetical continuum, and avoided labelling herself as either Francophone or Francophile, distancing herself from either identity.

6.3.3. Allison

Allison, on the other hand, embraced the term Francophile, if only because she did not feel right calling herself Francophone. She admitted that it was “maybe something that can change over time. For me right now, ‘Francophile’ because it would feel wrong to say I’m Francophone. Besides for academic purposes, I don’t tend to do much with it. After the exchange [program] though, that might change” (Allison). Allison understood that identity can change over time and space; she had high hopes that the exchange program in which she was planning on participating would help her to grow her confidence and competence in the language, and expose her to more French culture, events and day-to-day activities. While she did not feel a sense of belonging with the Francophone community at the time of the interviews, she did not rule out the possibility of one day feeling more Francophone.

6.3.4. Luca

Like Allison, Luca was adamant that he was very far from being Francophone. To identify specifically as Francophone, one needed to “grow up speaking it natively,” he

\textsuperscript{13} J denotes myself, the interviewer
said. “For me to call myself Francophone is blasphemous, it’s appropriating their culture. I have no right to claim Francophone as an identity” (Luca). To Luca, speaking French was one thing, but identifying himself with the community of L1 speakers to which that language belonged was completely different. On the continuum I proposed, he said he would fall much closer to the Francophile end than the Francophone end. He also said, referring to Francophones and his own FL2 identity, “I can speak to them but I don’t identify with them. I identify with others who are learning French. We are in the same boat” (Luca).

6.3.5. Benjamin

Benjamin’s stance was similar to Luca’s. Although he acknowledged the technical definition of Francophone as someone who simply speaks French, he still would not identify as a Francophone. He said, “I identify with Francophile more. By nature I’m not Francophone. I mean I am Francophone in the sense that I speak French, but not in the sense that I grew up in a French-speaking area, or that was the first language I learned” (Benjamin). Like other participants, he was hesitant to fully accept the identity of Francophile though. I asked him which of the two identities on the continuum he would take on for himself, and he elaborated: “I’ve never labelled myself as Francophile, but if I had to choose one of the two, I’d choose that one. … I don’t think I could call myself Francophone. I’m associated with French, so I’m more Francophile I guess” (Benjamin).

6.3.6. Eos

My final participant, Eos, had yet another perspective on her FL2 identity. She was the only one in the group who talked about others’ perceptions and input into her own identity. Even though Eos herself identified more as Francophone than Francophile (remember, as noted above, the word “Francophile” had negative connotations for her), it was other members of the Francophone community who tended to perceive her in various ways. She recounted some of the challenges she faced in her social circle, and in her volunteer and professional work within the Francophone community. “I would identify myself as Francophone, but others might not. It depends on who I’m talking to. If it’s someone who’s grown up in CSF school system, they tend to identify me as Francophile, but the younger ones ask me what I identify as, or they avoid it and make
references to *la grande francophonie*. But usually older people label me as Francophile. They put me in a box” (Eos). From Eos’ perspective, there was a marked difference in Francophones community members’ perception and acceptance of other French speakers depending on the age of the member. Nevertheless, she took issue with the whole idea of applying a label to her or anyone else’s identity. She said, “It’s just labels to divide people. For me, there is a division between the official definition [of Francophone] and actually being Francophone and identifying with them” (Eos).

I asked Eos if she had taken her mother’s French surname instead of her father’s Chinese one, would Francophones she met be quicker to accept her identity as a fellow Francophone? She thought so, and told me about her cousin, who is “also a ‘halfer’— half Filipino, half French. She took her dad’s last name, Beaulieu, and she did French Immersion,” just like Eos. She continued, “Apparently all the time, even though her level wasn’t that great, her teachers would say how great it was to have a Francophone in the class. And I asked her about that. Really? I was the same age as her and we got the same grades, but it was very interesting. Part of it is public perception. She dropped French after we graduated” (Eos). It was easier for her cousin to be identified as Francophone, despite her similar outward Asian appearance and similar level of competence. It seemed Eos always had to struggle to maintain her Francophone identity, as perceived by others, when it came so naturally to her cousin.

6.4. Belonging to the Francophone Community

In research on social identity, there is usually a connection between identifying with some group or community, and feeling like you belong to the group or community. To take an example from my own life: I enjoy singing and I sing in a community choir, so I may perceive myself to be part of the social group of people that one would dub “musicians” as we all have something in common: the fact that we produce music (whether that be by voice or by instrument). For argument’s sake, I may choose not to identify myself as a musician; rather I could just say I like singing, but not take on the identity of a musician, because in my mind, to be a musician is to study or train to become one; to be talented musically; and to perform for audiences. However, if others around me were to learn that I sing in a choir, even though it is unauditioned, they may
consider me a musician, but if I choose not to identify in that way, then that is significant—it is my own perception that is key in my identity construction. Further, I could consider myself a musician, because I have the ability to sing fairly well. If this is the case, then even if I decide to quit the choir and never interact with other members of the group that I would call musicians, it would still be possible to call myself a musician. I could in essence perceive myself to be a member the group one calls “musicians”. Again, it is my perception that matters most. Perceptions of others can also influence my decision to identify as a musician or not, and my identity can also change over time and space.

All of this talk about singing and music can similarly be applied to this study. I was interested to find out how my participants perceived their own identities as FL2 speakers, and if this changed depending on the type or frequency of interactions with FL1 speakers. In other words, I was curious to see if my participants felt a sense of belonging with the Francophone community in the Lower Mainland. Earlier in the interviews I had asked about the Francophone events and activities in which my participants had participated, and none of the participants had a very long list. Most of the activities they did were passive, solo activities like reading, listening to music, or watching movies in French. All of the participants also interacted almost daily with FL1 speakers in various contexts (but mainly academic), and most had attended at least a few public events where the main language spoken was French, but was all of this enough to make them feel like they belonged to the Francophone community?

In short, I found that the answer to this question was “no.” The number of interactions and events in which the participants were involved did not seem to significantly influence positively or negatively the overall perception of their identities as French speakers. When asked about whether he felt a sense of belonging with the Francophone community in the Lower Mainland, Benjamin (who spoke French at home with his father and sister, but never attended local French events) said “I haven’t had many interactions with the Francophone community here. I think I would fit in because I know the language and am very interested in it. I don’t know that I would know about specific cultural characteristics of the Francophone community in BC. I would fit in in the sense that I could take part in events” (Benjamin). Recall that earlier in his interview, Benjamin said he would not feel right calling himself Francophone in the BC context. With this comment then, one could infer that if he started taking part in more local
Francophone events, he could perhaps one day feel like he would belong more to the community. This is similar to what Allison said earlier in this chapter, that after becoming more competent in the language, she could start to feel more Francophone rather than Francophile. To her, it was important to partake in activities and events in order to foster more community spirit. When posed the question about belonging to the Francophone community, Allison commented that “It’s hard to feel part of a culture without going out to do things as part of the culture. At volunteer events I feel [as though I am] part of it, but once I’m at home with family, I go back to my own culture” (Allison). So even if, at the time of the interview, there were moments when Allison felt like she was a part of the Francophone community, they did not extend past the events. Hasna and Luca had similar mindsets. For Hasna, she believed that if she spent time in Quebec, she could possibly feel like she belonged more to the Francophone community. She said, “Right now, I only use French in a very specific context, mostly school. Maybe if I live in Quebec for a couple years, and perfect my French, maybe I’d feel different, but right now, not really” (Hasna). Luca also thought exposure to the community was a crucial component to feeling a sense of belonging with the community. He supposed that if he were to spend more time in France, he might feel like he belonged to that community of French speakers. However, he said “I’d have to live there a long while and really absorb the culture. You really have to give your all to it. You’re cheating on Francophone if you’re not” (Luca). It is interesting to note that Luca felt that the Francophone community in France was in closer reach than the Lower Mainland of speakers, whereas Hasna’s mind went to the most populous Francophone community in Canada.

Eos had a different take on my question. She responded that she would say that yes, she felt as if she belonged to the Francophone community in the Lower Mainland, but with hesitation and some qualifications. Firstly, she said that she felt that it was acceptable to call herself Francophone with a certain subset of the community: the youth. Here is what she had to say about young Francophones:

I haven’t met someone under 30 who has been pushing the labels of Francophone and Francophile. ... I find in general that the youth can be more accepting in Vancouver. In grade 12 I was coming to a crossroads, and I was talking to someone from Conseil jeunesse, and I wasn’t sure I wanted to continue in [French], because whenever I talked to adults in the community, it’s very clear that the sentiment is “Us” vs. “You who are clearly an [FL2] person.” But they invited me to come to one of their events. All of the staff, the kids in the program, they said, ‘Yeah your level might be a little lower, but you’re still part of la francophonie in
It’s a very different feeling when I’m hanging out with younger people than when I’m with older people. (Eos)

6.5. Comparing the Anglophone & Francophone Communities in BC

One could reasonably assume since the main language spoken in BC is English, that my participants, as English speakers, would feel a sense of belonging with the English-speaking (or Anglophone or EL1) community in BC. When questioned about this, however, participants did not respond with a unified perspective on what exactly defined the Anglophone community, and if it was important to distinguish it at all from the non-Anglophone community, or to even juxtapose it against the Francophone community. Most participants said they did not even think about it, that English was just the language they used in their everyday lives, and the identity of Anglophone was not one that they thought was important to them. Eos mentioned that she did not go out of her way to do activities in English like she did with French ones. Allison echoed this idea in her response: “I never really think of English, of myself as Anglophone. I never think about going to see a play in English. Everyone around me speaks English; my friends all have a sense of belonging, but it’s nothing to do with the language we speak. It comes from something else” (Allison). Luca said that English had been “neutralized by globalization. It’s like American culture, it’s everywhere. It’s not the same as German, Italian culture, et cetera. We just happen to speak the language. ‘Anglophone’ has a different connotation than ‘Francophone’” (Luca). Benjamin expanded on his perception of English speakers in the Lower Mainland by stating, “With English, it’s interesting because it’s so much become the dominant language, so people who don’t have English a first language, they have their own communities, like Mandarin speakers, but they are forced to learn English. English speakers are made up of so many people, so many different communities” (Benjamin).

The idea that the English-speaking community was diverse, made up of people from many different cultures and ethnicities, including those who speak English as a second language (EL2), was key to understanding why participants perceived there to be a difference between belonging to the English-speaking community as opposed to belonging to the French-speaking community of speakers in the Lower Mainland. On the
surface, one could argue that the communities are similar in everything except the language they speak, because like the Anglophone community in Canada, the Francophone community is also made up of people from various cultural, national and ethnic backgrounds. After all, la francophonie does cover a vast swath of the world geographically but also ethnically and culturally. There was a crucial distinction to make though, in the minds of my participants, between the Anglophone and Francophone communities in BC. For all six of them, it was a matter of identity, and to them, Francophones clearly identified themselves as Francophone not only because of the language they spoke, but also because of the culture and possible heritage they all shared, whereas English speakers did not regard Anglophone identity in a parallel way.

All of the participants believed that Francophones held on to their identity more strongly than Anglophones did. Sophie was the first to say that she was keenly aware of the difference between the two language groups, so much so that she felt it on a personal level. She said, “I’m an insider with the English group and an outsider with the French group. I am actually much more accepted and validated as a speaker of German in the world than as a speaker of French” (Sophie). Luca thought the main difference between the two communities was that French speakers had to “fight for [their] language” (Luca). This may be because English is spoken by the dominant majority in a province like BC—a fact that Eos, Hasna and Benjamin all touched on. To them, it was not only the strong sense of identity that Francophones possessed, but it was also a matter of numbers. For instance, Eos talked about the fact that the Francophone community in the Lower Mainland was smaller than the English-speaking community, which had a positive effect on her friendships.

In the French community, I’ve made some pretty awesome friends, so I know I can email them, because it’s smaller and easier to find people you can relate to. I have better friendships. I found that people were friendlier in Quebec when I spoke to them in French than people are here when I speak to them in English. Maybe it’s the Vancouver mindset. (Eos)

Nevertheless, she concluded that “English speakers don’t have the same sense of community that French speakers have. At least not here” (Eos). Hasna stated that because of their number, English speakers are “used to being the dominant majority, but for Francophones, they really cling to a sense of identity and community. It’s so much
more important to Francophones than it is for Anglophones” (Hasna). Finally, Benjamin said:

I think because the English speakers of the country are so much more numerous, it’s harder to identify as a group. Technically you’re a group, but it’s hard to identify with a group if it’s a language that most people speak. Whereas with French, fewer people speak it. It’s [the language] of fewer people in the country, so the group is a little more tight-knit. Especially Francophone communities in a particular area ... Most places I’ve been in Canada, English so much dominates. In Montreal, signs are in French, but there are still really heavy English overtones. When something is so overarching, it’s not really a unifying factor for any particular group, whereas if it’s a language that’s more obscure, that would be a thing that unifies speakers. French speakers have this more, especially somewhere like here. (Benjamin)

6.6. My Experience

I would say that my perception of myself as an FL2 speaker is in some ways similar to that of my participants. I would not be so quick to self-identify as Anglophone or Francophone, even though I do speak both languages. I would rather say I speak English and French (and some Spanish and a bit of American Sign Language). My linguistic identity, then, is shaped by my ability to speak several languages to varying degrees of fluency. When I specifically consider my identity as a French speaker, I identify first and foremost as an FL2 speaker. If I were to choose between the label of Francophile or Francophone, I would lean more towards Francophile. Unlike my participants, growing up I was not immersed in the French language, so I was always fascinated with anything to do with it, particularly anything to do with France. To my mind, my interest in the French language and culture deepened during my first university degree, and very much culminated during my sojourn in France in 2008, further cementing my Francophile or FL2 identity. For this study, I have had time to reflect on my FL2 identity, and I would most certainly say that I do not identify as Francophone, especially in the Canadian context, where calling oneself Francophone when you are not feels like an appropriation of French Canadian culture. Regarding language, I identify first and foremost as an English-speaking Canadian, as I see Anglophones and Francophones as two distinct and unique communities. This may be because I grew up in Winnipeg, where the French community is more publicly present than in the BC Lower Mainland, and I was always acutely aware that I did not belong to that community at a
time when I was not yet able to speak the language. Even now that I am more fluent in French, I still do not feel like I belong to the French-speaking community in Canada. Having known many FL1 Winnipeggers who speak English just as fluently as I do, there is no way I feel like I could identify with their group. Our social, historical, linguistic and religious backgrounds are simply more different than similar. I would rather say that I identify more so with other FL2 speakers, specifically Anglophones who have learned French in the Canadian context.
Chapter 7.

Discussion

7.1. Self-Perceived Communicative Competence in French

All six participants in this study experienced times when they felt confident about their French-speaking abilities, but also times when they felt doubtful, embarrassed or anxious about their abilities. This is only natural, as there are many factors that influence communication when one uses a second language (L2).

7.1.1. Power

One such factor that influences interactions is power. Researchers have found that L2 speakers are quite aware of the role power relations play in interactions with native (L1) speakers. In Norton Peirce’s (1995) theory of investment, she takes into account how power relations affect social interaction between L2 and L1 speakers of a language. Often it is the case that there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the two speakers, though this can change across time and space, and also coexists in contradictory and complex ways (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). As we see above in my participants’ experiences as well as mine, power imbalances affected our emotions and the way we all saw ourselves and our French as a second language (FL2) competence. In situations when we were interacting with native French (FL1) speakers, there was a general sense that the FL1 individual had more social power than the participant. Ng (1996) argues that language and power are related in several ways:

Language reveals power: the language behaviour (e.g. accent) of speakers may be taken as an indication of their powerful or powerless condition by hearers. Second, language reflects power: the prestige of a language rises or falls with the power of its users, and the reaction of the message recipients is affected by their belief about the power or powerlessness of the communicator. [...] Language creates power: talk and rules of discourse practice are potential resources that users can draw upon to advance individual and collective goals. (Ng, 1996, p. 193, italics in original)

In the case of the participants in this study, experiences using the French language provided ample opportunity for power to play its part in social interactions.
Power dynamics are particularly present in interchanges between people of different language groups. In this case, the interchanges were between FL1 and FL2 speakers whose L1 was English, so not only were there native speaker/non-native speaker dynamics at work, but we also need to take into consideration the sociolinguistic context, and the relationship between Anglophones and Francophones in British Columbia (BC) specifically. Francophones are a minority linguistic and sociocultural group in the Lower Mainland, and yet in situations when FL2 speakers communicate to Francophones in French, it is Francophones who have the power, so to speak. Roy and Galiev (2011) talk about the renegotiation and redistribution of power dynamics between Anglophones and Francophones in Canada in their study on Francophone identity in Canada, and I would add my own observations and argue that in my participants' interactions with FL1 speakers, there was a constant renegotiation of power in their interactions, depending on the time, place and interlocutor(s). Perhaps this is the reason why participants preferred to use French for activities on their own, like reading, writing, consuming entertainment and contributing to social media. In these situations, there was no interlocutor involved, and thus no power dynamics with which to contend. In these situations, participants tended to feel overall like more competent French users, while in situations when FL1 speakers were involved, there was the possibility of having their competence questioned. All of these observations of power dynamics in interactions also bring up questions of legitimacy, which I explore further in section 7.2.3.

7.1.2. Linguistic Insecurity

Renegotiations and redistribution of power within relationships gave way at times to an overall sense of linguistic insecurity among participants, which is consistent with my own personal experience. This included feelings of doubt, nervousness, anxiety, or general uncertainty when using French. Participants tended to feel these emotions when communicating with FL1 speakers in certain circumstances; when they perceived that they were being judged; or when they were being evaluated (by their professors, for example). In these instances, they described a decrease of confidence in their language abilities, which in turn affected their SPCC and their willingness to communicate (WTC) in a given situation. We can plainly see this because of the use of words like “good enough,” “self-conscious,” “room for improvement” and “better” when describing their own accents and level of French. This observation aligns with a study done by Roy
(2012), which states that young French Immersion (FI) students were reluctant to use their French when native French speakers were present. They were much more comfortable using their French around other FL2 speakers in their classrooms, and were usually more willing to do so, though there were likely several reasons for this; one being that they were more accustomed to using French with their peers. Indeed, this is what I found among my participants as well. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, there is a positive correlation between SPCC and WTC, and a negative correlation between SPCC and communication apprehension (CA). I found this to be true in my observations of participants’ experiences, depending on the situation. For example, participants were more willing to use their French in contexts with other FL2 speakers; this was when they perceived their own competence to be higher. Further, when participants were involved in solo activities such as reading, listening to music or watching movies in French, they did not report feelings of nervousness or anxiety. In these activities, there were no other French speakers present. Therefore my participants may have felt less judged in their French speaking abilities, and as a result judged themselves to be more competent FL2 users in these instances.

It is not unusual that my participants would be so critical of their own French language competence, seeing as they used the language more regularly in the academic context, which is in itself a system of evaluations and assessments by those with better language skills (i.e. instructors and professors). In such contexts, FL1 speakers’ constant judgments of FL2 speakers’ competence, whether it be through formal feedback on an assignment, or informally during a social or professional interaction, eventually must take a toll on the language learner, causing him or her to shape a certain view of himself or herself. This view can change over time and in various contexts, but ultimately can potentially influence one’s WTC, as we saw in Chapter 5 in the experiences of some of the participants. It is important to remember that interactions between individuals are complex and cannot be reduced to generalities, and many factors are involved in affecting one’s WTC. In this case though, it seems that negative interactions with FL1 speakers played a part in influencing my participants’ linguistic insecurity. These experiences at times shook the confidence of the participants, causing them to become nervous or doubtful of their communicative competence. This in turn affected the way they viewed themselves and their own competence in French. In other words, their individual identities were continually shaped each time they interacted with
an FL1 speaker. This had the potential for further implications socially, meaning that it might have had something to do with feeling part of the larger French speaking community, whatever that may have looked like to them. I will examine these concepts more in the next section.

### 7.2. French as a Second Language Identity

By examining my participants’ answers around FL2 and Francophone identity, I began to see that they held very specific opinions and feelings with regards to belonging to the Francophone community in Canada, and in British Columbia in particular. Several themes emerged from their responses, and I outline them below.

#### 7.2.1. Being Part of the Francophone Community

One of the ideas that kept coming up was the importance of shared characteristics between members of a group or community. In this case, with a community like Francophones in Canada, there is more to belonging to the community than simply speaking the language. To belong, one must possess other characteristics such as Francophone heritage and even ethnicity. Shared culture is also a key characteristic. In fact, according to Kramsch (1998), the very concept of culture is closely tied to language, and implies sharing among a community. She defines culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings. Cultures are heterogeneous and changing, so they are a constant site of struggle for recognition and legitimation” (p. 10). Moreover, from the perception of the participants, a shared heritage and sometimes even ethnicity also played a role in deciding whether one belonged to a community. In the course of the interviews, both Eos and Hasna mentioned ethnicity as a distinguishing feature among Francophones in Canada. Eos felt that her Asian appearance prevented her from being seen as a legitimate member of the Francophone community, while to Hasna, the Francophone community was mainly made up of Caucasians. In my experience, this comment speaks to the traditional stereotype many have of Canadian Francophones as being principally of European descent. Visible minorities like Hasna and Eos may not
feel that they readily have a place in the Canadian Francophone community with such narrow qualifications for inclusion.

In reality though, none of my six participants felt that they truly had a place in the Francophone community. In their opinions, this was a community to which only certain people could belong. The criteria one had to satisfy in order to be part of the community involved one’s L1, heritage and ethnicity. Only if one satisfied one or all of these criteria, could she or he be called Francophone (though there may always be exceptions to the rule). This supports what Klinkenberg (2016) argues in her study on Francophone identity and the *francophonie*. She says, “Contrairement à une opinion répandue, le mot francophone n’y signifie pas à l’origine ‘usager de la langue française’ mais bien ‘locuteur de langue maternelle française’” (p. 25-26, italics in original). However, she also argues that even those who do not necessarily speak French, or who spoke FL1 but then lost it over the years can still be considered Francophones. They just need to satisfy one of the other criteria above. She claims that to be Francophone signifies belonging to the Francophone community; it is not “un destin culturel: c’est une essence; ou, au mieux, un marqueur d’appartenance sociale. Et cette essence n’a plus de lien nécessaire avec une pratique linguistique,” (Klinkenberg, 2016, p. 30). Because of this, it is easy to see why the participants struggled so much with the question of their own FL2 identity. In order to belong to the Francophone community, in their perspective, one had to not only speak the language like an FL1 speaker, but take on elements of the culture and possibly have a certain heritage as well. My participants spoke FL2, did not participate in many Francophone cultural activities, and did not possess any Francophone heritage (with the exception of Eos, but I have already considered her specific background and self-perception).

Rampton talks about heritage, or more specifically inheritance, when he explores the problematic use of the term “native speaker” in his 1990 study, arguing that inheritance is one aspect of the concept of *language loyalty*; the other is affiliation. Both inheritance and affiliation are negotiated and have to do with the symbolic value of social group identification when speaking the language of that group. According to Rampton, “Affiliation refers to a connection between people and groups that are considered to be separate or different, whereas inheritance is concerned with the continuity between people and groups who are felt to be closely linked. Inheritance occurs within social boundaries, while affiliation takes place across them” (italics in original, Rampton, 1990,
Speakers’ affiliations and inheritances can change and shift over time and space, as people can belong to many or few groups at any given time. It is important to note that one may be quite communicatively competent in a language (or have high language expertise), but not feel a sense of belonging with that speech community. Rampton’s concepts can shed some light on why my participants may have struggled with their sense of belonging with the social group of Canadian Francophones: though they may have had high language expertise, they did not possess the other piece of the puzzle—language loyalty—and therefore did not feel a sense of belonging with the Francophone speech community.

I received interesting responses to my questions about dynamics between the Anglophone and Francophone communities in BC; they illustrated the at-times delicate relationship between minority and majority language groups. Ingroups are by nature exclusive, so people can become protective and defensive against those who are not part of their ingroup, but who may perceive themselves to be, or who are trying to join. Perhaps the participants perceived the Francophone community as one such ingroup. After all, it is true that historically over the years, to survive in an English-dominant country such as Canada, French people have had to work at protecting their language and culture. This continues today even in BC. My participants thus expressed the difficulty, and even impossibility, of being part of the Francophone community and labelling themselves as Francophones. In their minds, they did not feel like they could legitimately apply these labels to themselves.

7.2.2. Imagined FL2 Communities

One of the concepts that could help us further understand the participants’ struggle with articulating the basis of their FL2 identities is Anderson’s (1991) imagined communities. He invented this term to describe “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). According to this idea, even though members of a given community are accessible to each other up to a certain point, the individual will never be able to know or meet all of the other members of the community. According to Kanno and Norton (2003), imagined communities are formed in our minds when we feel a sense of community with people we have not met, but with whom we share common characteristics. Imagined communities can be powerful motivators for L2 learners in
particular to gain competence in the language, in hopes of becoming members of these communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Mitchell et. al., 2013). As such, our memberships in imagined communities can be dynamic and change across time and space, influencing learners’ identity construction and investment in learning the L2 (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000). Jackson (2008) talks about the global self being an integral part of one’s identity, and motivating the L2 learner to further belong to an imagined community, rather than a real, tangible one. She says, “The language learner’s vision of membership to an imagined global community may also impact his motivation to take a more active role in learning an international language” (p. 204).

Although there are tangible manifestations of the Francophone community throughout the Lower Mainland, I would suggest that the participants in this study perceived the Francophone community to be a largely imagined community. Dagenais (2003) has done much research on the role of imagined communities in the motivations of parents to enrol their children in FI programs. In particular, she has found that immigrant parents tend to prefer to place their children in these programs not only to give them a competitive edge in the future Canadian job market, but in order for them to one day belong to imagined multilingual, transnational communities. By choosing to continue their post-secondary education in French, I would argue that my participants were acting on the same motivations. By pursuing FL2 education and learning, and by desiring to become more competent FL2 speakers, the participants were investing in their membership in the imagined community of French speakers, whatever that may have looked like to them. Recall that several of the participants did not rule out the possibility of one day belonging more to the Francophone community, once they became more competent in the language. Others admitted that they would never feel like they belonged to the community, rather expressing that they were content to use French without belonging to a specific group of speakers per se.

7.2.3. Legitimacy as French Speakers

This leads me to the next theme that emerged from the questions about FL2 identity: legitimacy as French speakers. As mentioned above, my participants acknowledged that in order to be part of a group, one must not only perceive herself or himself to be a member of the group, but also be accepted into the group by others. In other words, one must be perceived as a legitimate member of the group. Sylvie Roy
has done much research on the legitimacy of language speakers in the Canadian context. She argues that in Canada, struggles of language legitimacy centre around who has the right to speak French in certain contexts, and who possesses the authority over the French language. At this point in time, French still technically “belongs” to native French speakers, specifically to those who live in places where Francophone language and culture are privileged: namely in Quebec and in large Francophone pockets around the country (Roy, 2012). According to Roy, in general, Anglophones are “moins autorisés ou moins ‘légitimes’ à utiliser le français comme des locuteurs natifs,” (Roy, 2012, p. 11). It makes sense, then, that my participants struggled with the idea that they could ever be legitimate members of an imagined Francophone community. Their feelings and perceptions of themselves as French speakers were not so out of place in the Canadian French-speaking context.

One idea that can help us to expand on the idea of legitimacy as FL2 speakers is Miller’s (2004) concept of audibility. Miller coined the term to describe the importance of being heard for an L2 speaker. To Miller, L2 speakers are legitimated by L1 speakers, and being audible to (or heard, or acknowledged by) others “determines the extent to which a student may participate in social interactions, negotiation, practices in the educational institution, and wider society,” (Miller, 2004, p. 294). Other researchers have expanded on Miller’s notion by applying it to L2 identity: Block (2007) says that L2 identity is developed depending on one’s audibility in his or her L2. One’s communicative competence also plays a role in this; to be an accepted member of a community, one must be able to “speak clearly and proficiently, in a way that readily represents their sense of self,” (Marx, 2002, p. 14). In the case of these participants, the notion of audibility could help explain why they may not have gone out of their way to participate in Francophone events, or sought out interactions with FL1 speakers: they may not have felt that they were being legitimated by members of the French speech community.

In Roy and Galiev’s 2011 work, they say that there are “embedded processes of power renegotiation and redistribution between native speakers and second language users, and in an officially bilingual context like Canada, between speakers of English and French,” (Roy & Galiev, 2011, p. 370). As mentioned above, my participants’ interview responses touched on the importance of power in their interactions with French speakers. In terms of identity, we see that power played a role in determining the legitimacy of participants as French speakers. The more perceived power that an
interlocutor had, the less legitimate the FL2 speaker could potentially feel. Roy argues that although this is currently the case in Canada, it should not be, and that FL2 speakers should have a place in the French-speaking social group. She says, “Puisque les locuteurs de la langue seconde font de l’utilisation de leur langue seconde et première différemment, ils devraient être perçus comme des locuteurs légitimes,” (Roy, 2012, p. 4); and that French Immersion students in particular “have a role to play as legitimate members in the future of a bilingual and multilingual Canadian society,” (Roy, 2010, p. 543).

The concepts of power and legitimacy as French speakers also come into play when we consider another group of individuals in the BC linguistic landscape: Francophone African immigrants. In their 2008 study on FL1 speakers from Africa who have immigrated to BC, Jacquet, Moore and Sabatier explore the identity of African FL1 speakers in the Canadian context. They state that the varieties of French spoken by immigrants are not always recognized as accepted, legitimate varieties of the French language as spoken by Francophones in Canada, and that in the face of non-acceptance, African Francophones “doivent se recomposer selon des (re)configurations nouvelles, souvent déjà fracturées par l’expérience de la guerre, des camps de réfugiés et de l’expatriation” (Jacquet et. al., 2008, p. 82). In short, the unique history and experience that African FL1 speakers bring to Canada challenges the traditional concept of Canadian Francophone identity.

The current situation that African Francophones are facing among local Francophone communities across the country can help us to more fully understand what FL2 speakers must confront in Canada today. Since Canadian FL2 speakers have learned and used French in many different ways depending on the province in which they live, what school they have attended, or even what teacher they may have had, they may speak a certain variety of French that differs from the local version of French spoken by Francophones. Francophones, in turn, may not recognize FL2 speakers’ French as legitimate. Just as in the case of African immigrants, if FL2 speakers seek to find a place in the Francophone community, they must push the boundaries of the concept of Francophone in order to do so. As Jacquet et. al. (2008) say, they must “redessiner les frontières d’une francophonie où chacun peut investir, symboliquement, sa légitimité” (p. 84), creating spaces where individuals can invent and reinvent themselves and their identities.
7.3. Bringing it all Together: SPCC and L2 Identity

This study aims to explore the relationship between self-perceived communicative competence and social identity among French as a second language speakers, both extremely complex subjects with multiple factors affecting each. While there is no simple, clear-cut relationship between the two concepts, we can indeed draw some important conclusions.

7.3.1. Membership in the Francophone Community

If we consider the participants’ perceptions of and experiences with the Francophone speech community in the Lower Mainland of BC through the lens of Tajfel’s (1981), Turner’s (1982) and Norton’s (2000) theories on social identity and second language identity, we can better understand why participants struggled to make sense of their identities as French speakers with regards to membership in this community. Because they mainly used French for academic purposes, participants lacked regular, meaningful interaction with members of the Francophone community. When they did interact with FL1 speakers in French, they often struggled with feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and embarrassment. While it is true that the participants reported positive as well as negative experience with FL1 interlocutors, all were concerned with speaking French “well” or “properly”; appearing to be competent French speakers was extremely important to them. As such, participants’ WTC with FL1 speakers fluctuated depending on the context, their interlocutor(s) and their general mood at the time.

Feuer, in her 2013 work on Jewish ethnic identity, talks about excluding and “Othering” ingroup members “in order to clearly define the characteristics and access keys to [her] envisioning of the ideal imagined Jewish community (Feuer, 2013, p. 124). I believe my participants did something similar to this as well. By perceiving FL1 speakers to be members of the linguistic group the participants considered Francophone, they in essence “Othered” those speakers, thereby placing themselves in the outgroup and excluding themselves from belonging to the ingroup “Francophones.” It is interesting that they should do this, given the society in which all of them had been raised. Canada (and BC) is generally a very multicultural and tolerant society, and is a land of immigrants (with the exception of indigenous peoples). All those who make Canada their home must find their place to belong among its many cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups. For
generations, Canadians have been shifting boundaries and reimagining society so that all may belong. My participants seemed to perceive one linguistic group in particular as so closed off they could not hope to ever truly be part of it, and we must question why this was the case. From their interview responses, participants painted a picture of Canadian Francophones as a social group with clear boundaries and specific criteria for belonging. As competent FL2 speakers, all of the participants expressed the difficulty in finding a place to fully belong in such a group; to ever be accepted by the community’s members was a concept that was out of reach for most of them. It is somewhat surprising that this vision of the Francophone community should be so compartmentalized, when Canadians, and young people in particular, can also be so open and welcoming to others in our country.

On the whole, my participants were quick to point out that they did not truly belong to the Francophone community. Despite the fact that the word “Francophone” could mean a few different things, they clearly believed that they could not be consistently perceived as legitimate members of the community, not only because of their SPCC, but due to other factors as well: history, ethnicity, L1, and minimal participation in Francophone cultural events. Even those who did sometimes become involved in public activities felt only briefly that they were part of the community. In the end, no matter how competent they were or perceived themselves to be, they could never be considered or consider themselves part of the Francophone community of speakers, or la francophonie; even though the community itself was largely imagined in the minds of participants, as they may not have personally met many Francophones. As Klinkenberg (2016) writes, “Pour le grand public, le mot [francophonie] va désormais désigner une identité, plutôt que des compétences langagières,” (p. 29). The participants all had a very clear idea of who constituted the community, and who did and did not belong. But was there another group or community in which the participants could find space to belong?

7.3.2. Participants’ FL2 Identity

To answer this question, recall from Chapter 2 that research on identity has shown that we continually construct and negotiate our identities through discourse. One can have many identities, but all are maintained through social interactions with others. Belonging to speech communities can be complicated when one knows more than one
language. As one’s competence and frequency of use in an L2 changes, one’s identity also changes accordingly. Each time my participants used French for a homework assignment, or interacted with an FL1 speaker, they added more substance and layers to their identities in FL2. As mentioned in Chapter 5, through all of their activities and interactions, it was very important for them to see themselves and have others see them as competent French speakers. In a sense, this was the identity they took on—competent FL2 speaker—though it had the potential to change depending on the context or situation. All perceived themselves to be fairly competent in the language (and were strong students), but also expressed the desire to develop and deepen this to become better, more competent French speakers; not one was completely satisfied with their current level of French.

Earlier in this chapter I talked about how my participants did not identify as Francophones, but they also did not identify as Francophiles either. Generally, they felt like they were more than just Francophiles, though pinpointing who exactly they were and where they belonged as French speakers was quite challenging for them. I mentioned in Chapter 3 that Roy (2010) found that some FI students felt their identity to be between monolingual and bilingual. In a similar way, my participants struggled with finding their identities between Francophone and Francophile. It may be helpful here to draw on the concept of Third Space, as explored by Bhabha (1994). He argues that communication is an act that not only engages two communicators, but also creates meaning outside of the participants’ consciousness. With respect to this argument, Kramsch (2009) states that the debate about English language learners’ rights to appropriate the language and give it their own meanings speaks to Bhabha’s notion of Third Space. As English L2 speakers use the language for their own means, they do so in the space outside of that which EL1 speakers occupy. She says, “The cultural space carved out by our words and those of others is, in modern societies, an eminently heterogeneous, indeed contradictory and ambivalent space in which third perspectives can grow in the margins of dominant ways of seeing” (p. 237). It is this cultural space where meaning is made, and according to Kramsch, can be a site of struggle. Kramsch (2009) further suggests the concept of third culture to more fully understand thirdness in language learning, and to do this we need to move beyond the duality of L1 vs. L2, Us vs. Them and Self vs. Other, as these imply a static, unchanging cultural space. Rather, she says that third culture is “multiple, always subject to change and to the tensions and
even conflicts. [...] These tensions can be painful, but they can also be fruitful” (Kramsch, 2009, p. 238). Applying these ideas to this study gives us a glimpse into the site of identity construction of my participants, and why it is so challenging for them to articulate aspects of their identities in FL2.

With regards to their perceptions of competence, it is significant to note that the one context that the participants were quite satisfied with their competence and their identities was in the school setting. Even though they all experienced some form of anxiety in the classroom or around assignments, this was the setting that was most familiar and comfortable for the participants. In school they had a place to belong. Other classmates learning and using FL2 created some sense of camaraderie. I would argue that this is because all of the participants learned French through FI programs. This is where their FL2 identities were created, nurtured, challenged, and deepened over the years. Their identities as French speakers were inextricably bound to their identities as French learners and students. Whether it was important to them or not to belong to the Francophone community, all of the participants had significant investment in being perceived as successful French language learners and users. Perhaps it was safer in the end to identify as French learner instead of Francophone. I also speculate that participants may have felt that taking on more the identity of Francophone than of French learner would mean perhaps distancing themselves from their identities as Anglophones, on some subconscious level.
Chapter 8.

Conclusion

8.1. What I Found

At the beginning of this study I set out to determine if self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC) plays a role in social identity construction among French as a second language (FL2) speakers in the context of British Columbia (BC), Canada. What I found was that there really is no simple answer to this research question. Like identity itself, the response is multifaceted and complex. There is no simple, clear answer to the question “What does it mean to belong to the Francophone community in a multicultural society such as Canada?”

Questionnaires, interviews and my own self-reflection have given us a glimpse into the thoughts, perceptions and experiences of seven Simon Fraser University (SFU) students (including myself) who were undertaking studies in French at the time of the study. All of the participants had studied French for many years, and had had much time to consciously or subconsciously construct and negotiate consciously their identities as FL2 speakers. All of the participants recounted experiences with native French (FL1) speakers that both encouraged and challenged them in various ways. They conducted various parts of their academic, and sometimes even personal, lives in French, and mainly perceived themselves to be competent French speakers, at least in certain situations. Despite this, however, participants struggled when considering where to place themselves in relation to la francophonie. With few exceptions, they felt unable to fully claim membership in the Francophone community, largely because they did not share the first language (L1), heritage or culture that other Francophones shared, and therefore did not perceive themselves as legitimate members of the group.

8.2. Limitations to the Study

Any time one conducts a research study, there will be limitations and things that the researcher wished she or he could have done differently. This study is no exception.
One of the limitations to this study was the fact that I was only able to recruit six participants. Perhaps this is more so a limitation to the research methodology, but only hearing stories from a handful of FL2 speakers meant that I was unable to make generalizations or analyse data I collected in a statistical manner. If we wanted to try to see trends in FL2 learners’ experiences, and make more general observations, it would have been more effective to include at least several more participant interviews. However, even then it would be impossible to generalize experiences and apply perceptions to all FL2 learners, because my participants’ thoughts, feelings and stories were all their own. One solution could have been to incorporate more quantitative research methods into the study, thus making it a mixed methods sequential explanatory study, according to Creswell (2013). I could have done an initial survey of perhaps 75-100 speakers, and then perhaps selected a certain number at random to participate in the longer interviews. This way I could have statistically analyzed the data from the questionnaires, while still employing interviews and self-reflection to supplement my findings. However, the qualitative, narrative method I chose to use carries its own validity, so quantitative methods were not really necessary to explore the phenomena of SPCC and identity.

Another limitation was the length of the interviews themselves: they were all only 1 to 1.5 hours in length. In order to really delve into participants’ SPCC and identity in FL2, I would have had to talk with them for longer periods of time, which was unrealistic, given time constraints and limited resources. If anything, I would have liked to interview all of the participants a second time six months to a year later, in order to see how things had changed, but again, I did not have enough time to do so.

One final, important limitation to consider is the very problem of the methodology itself. Generally, by asking for students to participate in a study about L2 identity, those who are particularly interested in this subject will be the ones to volunteer to participate. If the researcher only interviews students who have taken time to think about questions of competence and identity, she or he does not hear from others who may not be particularly interested in these questions or who have never really thought about the subject. This has the potential to create bias in the study results. Further, by placing specific emphasis on a particular subject, it could cause the participants to pay specific attention to that subject, and cause them to see it as especially important, thus possibly influencing their responses. It is difficult to know if the subject in question would normally
be given consideration in their everyday lives if it was never brought to their attention in this manner. This, however, is unavoidable and is just the reality of studies like this one.

8.3. Areas for Further Research

While I am satisfied with the results of this study, I can identify several questions that have arisen and that could be explored more in depth in future studies. Firstly, the question of age differences could be interesting to consider. All of my participants were young, between the ages of 19 and 27. Future studies could look at the identity perceptions of older, more experienced FL2 speakers (in addition to younger ones), to see whether the age of the participants is an important factor in FL2 identity construction and Francophone community membership. On the other hand, Eos mentioned that the younger FL1 generation had no problem calling her Francophone, while the older generation of FL1 speakers would not even consider it. Perhaps rather than looking at the role SPCC plays in FL2 identity construction, one also could look at the role interlocutors’ age has on FL2 identity construction.

A second area for further research could be incorporating BC Francophones’ perspectives as well into a study. This study admittedly only included the perceptions of the FL2 speakers. I chose not to interview FL1 speakers, as I wanted to give an unfettered space to the voices of FL2 speakers in the context of minority Francophone Canada. Other studies could combine the perceptions of the two different groups, finding where their stories overlap in order to find commonalities and differences between them. It could be a powerful way to bridge the figurative gap between the two linguistic communities.

Although I am sure there are many more possibilities, one last option for future research is to compare French Immersion (FI) and Core French (CF) students’ experiences. The one thing that united all of the participants and myself in this study was the fact that we were all young adults studying French in a post-secondary institution. The difference was that we had all learned French in various ways and for various lengths of time. All of the participants had been part of FI programs, while I had spent several years in CF before studying it intensively in university. In some ways, my
experiences were similar to my participants’, but in other ways, I would never be able to identify fully with them because I was never an FI student. It would be interesting to compare several former CF students and several former FI students who are currently pursuing French in university. There may be specific observations to be made between members of each group, and most definitely commonalities between the two groups as well, as there is in this study.

8.4. What We Have Learned: Final Thoughts

As I come to the end of this paper, I would like to note some final thoughts regarding the study, my participants, and my own journey. All of the participants had specific perceptions of who they were as French speakers, and how they spoke the language. I too see my FL2 identity in a certain way, and it changes from year to year, depending on what I am doing or studying, and with whom I am speaking French. It is heartening to note that during or after the interviews all of my participants shared with me that they had enjoyed the process of talking about their competence and identity. My questions had made them reflect on themselves, and these reflections gave them deeper understandings of who they were as individuals and as FL2 speakers. I too learned about myself in the process of this study. It is not often that one has the opportunity to record and publish her own thoughts and perceptions on a topic that is so important and exciting to her at a specific moment in time. I regard myself with a renewed passion for the French language and a deeper sense of my FL2 identity as well.

At the current time, countless English-speaking Canadians are actively engaged in learning French. These FL2 learners, whether they are aware of it or not, are continually constructing, developing, and negotiating their identities as FL2 speakers. As such, the more they learn, the more their FL2 identity evolves. This varies from moment to moment, place to place, and experience to experience. I would like to think that all Canadians—Francophone or not—have some sort of FL2 identity, whether we barely know a few words, or whether we are fluent enough to conduct our daily lives in French. Knowing another language changes us, grows us, and deepens our understanding of the people who speak the language. In Canada today, no matter who we categorize as
“Francophone,” the one characteristic that unites people under that label is the ability to speak French. We all carry different perceptions of what “Francophone” means to us. The question that remains is: how can we move forward in rethinking the concept of the term? In an ever-changing, multicultural context such as Canada, boundaries would need to be challenged and deconstructed, and perceptions and assumptions challenged in order to make room for those who desire to belong to the (imagined) Francophone community, even those who perceive their own language abilities as less-than-adequate. Identifying with any group is a complex process, and there is no easy answer when considering how to move forward, but it is up to all of us to continue to share our stories in the hopes that we can build more bridges between us all to welcome the Other.
References


Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch. (2016b). Colleges and
students/colleges-and-universities/.

Canadian Parents for French: British Columbia & Yukon Branch. (2016, June 6). The
benefits of bilingualism, let us count the ways. [Facebook post]. Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/notes/canadian-parents-for-french-bc-yukon/the-
benefits-of-bilingualism-let-us-count-the-ways/1041304909279463.


https://www.capilanou.ca/languages/French/.

Learner and Parent Perspectives. In K. Arnett & C. Mady (Eds.), *Minority
Populations in Canadian Second Language Learning*. (pp. 22-37). Multilingual
Matters.


*Reviewing Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences*. (pp. 166-179). Routledge.

Cohen, A. D. (1996). How Immersed are Students in Immersion Programmes? In T.
Hickey & J. Williams (Eds.), *Language, Education and Society in a Changing
World*. (pp. 196-208). Dublin: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Cole, D. & Meadows, B. (2013). Reimagining Sociolinguistic Identification in Foreign
Language Classroom Communities of Practice. In D. J. Rivers & S. A. Houghton
(Eds.), *Social Identities and Multiple Selves in Foreign Language Education*. (pp.

Collège Éducacentre. (n.d.). À propos de nous. Le collège francophone en Colombie-
propos-de-nous/.


*Language*, 63, 544-557.

Cook, V. (1999). Going Beyond the Native Speaker in Language Training. *TESOL
Quarterly*, 33(2), 185-209.


Bonjour!

My name is Jenny and I am a graduate student in the French Department here at SFU. I am looking for several upper-level French students to participate in a research study for my graduate thesis project this year. I will be exploring how adults who speak French as an additional language in the Canadian context perceive themselves and their linguistic competence, and if this self-perception influences their sense of belonging with the French-speaking community. This is an exciting opportunity to help out a fellow SFU student and learn something new about yourself and academic research in the process!

Some details about the study:

- You are welcome to participate if you: a) speak French as an additional language; b) learned and/or studied French in the Canadian context; and c) have resided in Canada for at least several years.
- The study will take only around a couple of hours of your time:
  - 15-20 minutes to fill out an electronic questionnaire
  - 1-1.5 hours to meet with me for a conversation about your French language abilities and your relationship to the Francophone community
- The in-person meeting will take place in a public setting at or near one of SFU’s campuses (the most convenient location for you). At the meeting you will receive a free beverage of choice as a thank-you for participating! Conversations will be recorded on an audio-recording device.
- You get to decide what language you want to use for the in-person meeting: French, English, or a mixture of both. You will also get to see the questions ahead of time.
- Your personal information will be kept confidential at all times, and if anything you say is used in the final thesis write-up, it will be cited under a pseudonym.
- You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- All participants will be given the option of reading the results of the study once it is complete.
Are you interested in participating? Great! Please contact me for more information:

Jenny Steinke  
SFU French Department  
Office: WMC1623  
@sfu.ca

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Gaëlle Planchenault  
SFU French Department  
Office: WMC 1620  
@sfu.ca
Appendix B

Consent Form

Consent Form

“The role of self-perception of French language competence in social identity construction”
Thesis Project, Jenny Steinke

Who is conducting the study?
Principal Investigator (PI): Jenny Steinke, French Department, Office: WMC 1632, @sfu.ca

This research is being undertaken in order to complete a thesis for a Master of Arts degree in French Studies. Any information obtained as part of the study will be used for this project.

Who is funding this study?
This study is being funded by the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Why should you take part in this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore how adults who speak French as an additional language in the Canadian context perceive themselves and their linguistic competence, and if this self-perception influences their sense of belonging with the French-speaking community. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you speak French as an additional language and you live in Canada.

Your participation is voluntary
Any participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences to the education, employment or other services to which you are entitled or are presently receiving.

What happens if you say “Yes, I want to be in the study?”
If you say “Yes”, here is what will happen:
• You will be given a questionnaire to fill out prior to meeting with the PI
• You will meet with the PI at a convenient time for a one-on-one discussion that will last around one to one-and-a-half (1-1.5) hours. The meeting will take place...
in an informal public setting. Questions will be sent to participants ahead of time and will help to guide the conversation. There is a chance that not all questions will be covered.

- Participants will decide what language they would like to speak during the discussion: English, French or a mixture of both.
- Your responses will be recorded on an audio recording device, but they will be kept strictly confidential. All recordings will be destroyed once transcription of the interview is complete. Note that all notes and questionnaires associated with your participation will be kept in a locked cabinet or on a password-protected USB stick.

**Are there any risks to participating in this study?**
There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study, however you will not be obligated to answer any question if you do not want to.

**What are the benefits to participating?**
Participating in this study could help you to become more aware of your own perceptions of language use and social relationships. Findings of this research will help other French learners in a similar way, and teachers and other researchers may benefit as well.

**Will you be reimbursed for taking part in this study?**
You will not be paid for participating in this study. However, you will receive a free beverage of your choice from the location where the interview is being conducted, at the time of the interview.

**How will your privacy be maintained?**
Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your identity will not be released without your consent unless required by law. All documents and/or recordings will be identified by a code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic files will be password protected and stored on a USB stick. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Email is not a secure means of communication; therefore any information transmitted over email cannot be guaranteed to be kept fully confidential. The only people who will have access to your personal information are the PI and the PI’s thesis supervisor, Gaëlle Planchenault, SFU French Department, planchenault-gaelle@sfu.ca.

**What if you decide to withdraw your consent to participate?**
If you choose to enter the study and then decide to withdraw at a later time, none of the data collected about you during your enrolment in the study will not be included in the results.
How will the study results be disseminated?
The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in academic journal articles and/or books, and/or be presented at academic conferences. Participants will be given the option of reading the results of the study once it is complete.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?
The PI is available to answer any inquiries you may have, to ensure that you fully understand all procedures of the study prior to committing to participate.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffry Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics, at jeffry.toward@sfu.ca, or [redacted].

Will data obtained be used in the future?
There are no known future purposes for data collected during the course of this study.

Are you interested in participating in any future studies carried out by the PI?
Checking yes will allow the PI to contact you with any future requests for this purpose.

_____ YES  _____NO

Consent to Participate
Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your education or employment at Simon Fraser University.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study, and have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Signing this document does not waive any of your legal rights as a participant in this study.

________________________________________________________________________
Participant Signature  Date (yyyy/mm/dd)
Appendix C.

Participant Questionnaire

Part I: Please provide the following information. All information provided will be kept confidential and all participants will be referred to as a pseudonym for the study.

Name: __________________________________________ Age: ___________
Address: ________________________________________________________
Start Date at SFU: __________________ Anticipated End Date: _____________________
Major: __________________ Previous Degrees (if any): _________________________________
Past French Classes Taken (university & K-12) & Final Grades (optional):____________________
______________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________

Current French Classes:

Involvement in University Activities Relating to French (ex. Clubs, tutoring centre, etc.):

When did you start learning French? ____________________________
Place of Birth (plus country if other than Canada): ____________________________
Places Lived in Canada: _________________________________________________
Date of Move to B.C. (if applicable) :________________________
First Language (L1): __________________ Second Language (L2): _________________
Other Languages Known: ____________________________________________

Please rate yourself as beginner (1), intermediate (2), advanced (3) or expert (4) in your French language ability for the following. Feel free to use half points as well (ex. 3.5=between advanced and expert):
Reading __________ Writing __________ Listening ___________ Speaking ___________

For Parts II & III, please check off or highlight the statements that apply best to your situation. Don’t spend too much time thinking about each statement. Please answer honestly and truthfully; there is no right or wrong answer. Answers may be referred to in the interview part of the study.

Part II: I am studying French because (check all that apply):

☐ It will allow me to be more at ease with fellow Canadians who speak French.
☐ It will allow me to be more at ease with French speakers living in or visiting Canada.
☐ I think it may someday be useful in getting a good job.
☐ It will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.
☐ It will enable me to better understand and appreciate Francophone art and literature.
☐ I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.
☐ It will allow me to communicate with French speakers when travelling abroad.
☐ I will need it for my future career.
☐ It will make me a more knowledgeable person.
☐ Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of a foreign language.
Part III: Rate each statement by highlighting the response below that applies best to your situation, on a scale between 1 and 5 as follows:
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I enjoy studying French
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. I participate willingly in French class
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. I feel confident in my language skills when giving answers or speaking in class.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. I get embarrassed or nervous when I am called on in class.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

5. Speaking French comes naturally to me.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

6. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in French class.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. I can speak French well if I have time to think about what I want to say.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

8. I always feel that other students speak French better than I do.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree

9. I think about how to formulate sentences in French before I speak in class.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Strongly Agree
10. I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak French.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

11. I feel more confident when writing in French than when speaking it.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

12. I am anxious of what my instructor thinks of my level of French.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

13. I take advantage of opportunities to speak French outside of the university setting.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

14. I try to expose myself to French art and literature outside of class (ex. Reading French books and magazines, seeing French plays, watching French movies, etc.).
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

15. If there were French-speaking families in my neighbourhood, I would go out of my way to speak to them in French.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

16. If I met a French speaker at a social event who spoke English, I would still speak to him or her in French.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

17. I would like to meet more people who are learning French.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

18. The more I get to know French speakers, the more I want to be fluent in their language.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

19. I would like to know more French Canadian speakers.
   Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree
20. I have a favourable attitude towards French Canadians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

21. The French-Canadian heritage is an important part of our Canadian identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. If Canada should lose the French culture of Quebec and Francophone Canada, it would indeed be a great loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. I can get along very easily with French Canadians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. I have had good experiences with French Canadians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

25. English Canadians should make a greater effort to learn the French language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix D.

Interview Questions

Part I: The role of French in your life/Le rôle de français dans ta vie

- Out of all the French courses you have taken, what course(s) stand(s) out to you and why? De tous les cours que tu as suivis en français, quel(s) cours te ressortit/ressortissent et pourquoi ?

- Why did you start learning/studying French initially? Why are you taking university level French courses? Would you like to continue to use French after graduating? Pourquoi as-tu choisi d’apprendre le français ? De suivre les cours de français à un niveau universitaire ? Tu veux continuer à utiliser le français après obtenir votre diplôme ?

- How do your family and friends feel about you learning French? Comment ta famille et tes amis se sentent-ils que tu apprends le français ?

- Can you choose 3 or more words to describe what your French learning experience has been like? Has this changed over the years? Peux-tu choisir 3 mots ou plus pour décrire ton expérience d’apprentissage ? Cela a changé au fil des ans ?

- Is it important for you to have friends or family around that know French? Est-ce important d’avoir des membres de famille ou des amis qui savent parler français ?

- In what contexts do you currently use French (ex. at home, at university, in social situations, online, watching French movies or plays, etc.)? Think about when you speak, listen to, read and write in French. Dans quel(s) contexte(s) utilises-tu français ? (p. ex. à la maison, à l’université, dans les situations sociales, en ligne, en regardant des films ou des pièces français, etc.). Pense à quand tu parles, écoutes, lis et écris en français.

- How often do you use French, and how has that changed from year to year? Quelle est la fréquence à laquelle tu utilises le français, et cela a-t-il changé au fil des ans ?

- What is your favourite activity to use French for? Quelle est ton activité préférée à faire en français ?

Part II: Your competence in French/Ta compétence en français

- Overall, are you satisfied with your current level of French? Think about when you speak, listen to, read and write in French. Do you think you are better at one of these four aspects than the others? Why? Es-tu satisfait(e) avec ton niveau/ta compétence en français ? Pense à quand tu parles, écoutes, lis et écris en français. Fais-tu un de ces aspects mieux que les autres trois ? Pourquoi ?

- The term “accent” can relate to the pronunciation of words, intonation, prosody, and how long it takes you to say something when you speak a foreign language. In your own opinion, do you have an accent when you speak French? If so, does it bother you to have an accent? Are there moments when you are more aware of it than others? Le
terme « accent » comprend la prononciation des mots, l’intonation, la prosodie, et la longueur des mots et des phrases quand on parle une langue étrangère. Selon toi, as-tu un accent en français ? Si oui, cela t’ennuie à avoir un accent ? Y a-t-il des moments particuliers où tu rends compte de ton accent ?

- How important is it for you to speak with a “native” French accent? What variety of French do you think of when you think about speaking with a “native” accent? Est-il important de parler avec un accent « natif » en français ? À quelle variété de français penses-tu quand tu penses à parler avec un accent « natif » ?

- Have you ever passed for a native French speaker? In what context? If not, do you think you could ever pass for a native French speaker? Why or why not? As-tu jamais passé pour un locuteur/locutrice français(e) natif/native? Selon toi, peux-tu passer pour un locuteur natif de français ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

- Do you consciously try to use “good” grammar when you speak French? When you write in French? In which contexts? Es-tu conscient(e) d’employer de « bonnes » constructions grammaticales quand tu parles en français ? Quand tu écris ? Dans quel(s) contexte(s) ?

- Do you consciously change the type of French you use depending on the context? Ex. At school, with friends, with native French speakers, online, etc. Le type de français que tu emploies change-t-il selon le contexte ? Ex. à l’école, avec des amis, avec des locuteurs français, en ligne, etc.

- With respect to your level of French, how do you feel when you communicate in French with a FL1 speaker (either orally or in writing)? With a FL1 from Quebec/France/another Francophone country? With another FL2 speaker? With a FL2 who has more experience with French than you? With less experience? Décrivez tes sentiments quand tu communique en français avec un locuteur de FL1 (soit à l’écrit, soit à l’oral) ? Avec un locuteur du Québec/de la France/d’un autre pays francophone ? Avec un locuteur de FL2 ? Avec un locuteur de FL2 qui a plus d’expérience en français que toi ? Qui a moins d’expérience ?

- Do you feel that you are more competent when you speak French or when you write in French? Penses-tu que tu es plus compétent(e) quand tu parles français ou quand tu écris en français ?

- In your opinion, is your current level of French due to the amount of time you have spent studying it in school/university? Or other factors (ex. motivation, age when you started learning, aptitude, proximity to other French speakers, etc.)? Selon toi, ton niveau de compétence en français est-elle grâce aux cours scolaires ou universitaires, ou à d’autres facteurs (p. ex. motivation, âge d’apprentissage, aptitude, proximité à d’autres locuteurs français, etc.) ?

- Can you describe an experience of a time when you felt really happy with your level of French (can relate to speaking, listening, reading or writing)? How did you feel? Peux-tu décrire une expérience d’un moment où tu t’es senti(e) content(e) avec ton niveau de français (parler, écouter, lire ou écrire) ? Comment t’es-tu senti(e) ?

- How about a time when you were very unhappy with your level of French? How did you feel then? Peux-tu décrire une expérience d’un moment où tu t’es senti(e) mécontent(e) avec ton niveau de français (parler, écouter, lire ou écrire) ? Comment t’es-tu senti(e) ?
Part III: The role of the French/Francophone community in your life/Le rôle de la communauté française/francophone dans ta vie

- How often do you communicate with these people? What method of communication do you use (ex. Speaking face to face, video/audio chat, through email or online forum, etc.)? Quelle est la fréquence de ta communication avec ces gens ? Quel moyen de communication utilises-tu (p.ex. face-à-face, chat vidéo, courriel, forums en ligne, etc.) ?
- Have you any spent time abroad in a French-speaking place? What was your experience like communicating with Francophones there? As-tu passé du temps à l’étranger dans un lieu francophone ? Peux-tu décrire ton expérience ?
- Do you ever attend local events where the main language spoken/used is French (ex. Movies, music performances, plays, conferences, etc.)? Assistes-tu aux évènements locaux où la langue parlée/utilisée est français (ex. des films, des concerts de musique, des pièces, des conférences, etc.) ?
- Do you like to speak/use your French when you have the opportunity to? Aimes-tu parler/pratiquer le français si tu en as d’occasion ?
- What do you think of when you hear the term “Francophone”? “Francophile”? Would you identify with either of these terms, neither, or a bit of both? À quoi penses-tu quand tu entends le terme « francophone » ? « Francophile » ? Identifies-tu avec un de ces termes, ni l’un ni l’autre, ou un peu des deux ?
- In your opinion, what does it mean to you when you hear about “the Francophone community of speakers” in the Lower Mainland? In Canada? In the world? À ton avis, que veut dire «la communauté des locuteurs francophones » en Colombie-Britannique ? Au Canada ? Dans le monde ?
- What does it mean to feel a sense of belonging with a group? Quelle est la signification d’avoir un sentiment d’appartenance avec un groupe/une communauté ?
- Do you feel a sense of belonging with other English speakers here in the Lower Mainland? Do you feel that EL2 users also belong to the community of English speakers here? Or is there a difference between EL1 and EL2 speakers in this regard? What about
in the overall Canadian context? Does it change when you think about people who use English around the world?

As-tu un sentiment d’appartenance avec la communauté de locuteurs anglophones en C-B ? Penses-tu que les locuteurs d’AL2 appartiennent aussi à cette communauté ? Y a-t-il une différence entre les locuteurs AL1 et AL2 à cet égard ? Et dans le contexte canadien ? Cela change quand tu imagines les locuteurs anglophones dans le monde entier ?

- As a FL2, do you feel a sense of belonging with the Francophone community here in the Lower Mainland? What about in the overall Canadian context? In the world? Comme un locuteur/locutrice FL2, as-tu un sentiment d’appartenance avec la communauté de locuteurs francophones en C-B ? Au Canada ? Dans le monde ?

- In your opinion, is there a difference between belonging to the community of English speakers vs. Belonging to the community of French speakers? À ton avis, y a-t-il une différence entre appartenir à la communauté de locuteurs anglophones vs. à la communauté de locuteurs francophones ?

- If you speak any other languages, how do your experiences with speakers of that language compare to your experiences with speakers of French? Si tu parles d’autres langues, peux-tu comparer tes expériences avec des locuteurs de ces langues avec tes expériences avec des locuteurs francophones ?