

Language attitudes towards French: A mixed-method investigation on potential Chinese immigrants in Ontario and Quebec Canada

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study aims to explore the language perceptions of Chinese individuals who live in Canada and consider immigration, specifically focusing on their attitudes towards French. The goal is to understand their attitudes towards French and, ultimately, increase policy makers' awareness of the future maintenance of French in Canada and re-evaluating the current language teaching approach. Seventy-eight Chinese participants from Quebec or Ontario regions completed two questionnaires that were derived from the Belief about Ethnolinguistic Vitality framework, followed by a semi-structured interview conducted with sub-sampled nine participants to explore reasons behind their attitudes. In terms of analyses and results, although Quebec participants believed that French would become more commonly valued and used in the future, both Ontario and Quebec participants claimed that French would not be as essential as English, and they had more positive attitudes towards the English acquisition because of its great regional power and instrumental benefits. Additionally, a multi-regression analysis demonstrated that attitudes towards French engagement were affected by sociocultural differences and language proficiency but were not affected by educational contact (French language course). The findings of thematic analysis indicate that problems about the monolingual teaching approach led to a negative view of French lessons and even a negative attitude towards engaging with the French language. Finally, practical implications and suggestions were provided in order to enhance their attitudes towards French engagement in Canada.

Keywords language attitudes, language acquisition, Chinese immigrants' group, French language

1. Introduction

Canada, unlike other immigrant countries, has never pursued a single national language. However, despite the existence of two official languages, geolinguistic differences are obvious within this nation. The enormous number of French speakers in Quebec and Acadian regions, while in other regions such as Ontario, the dominant language is English (MacLennan, 2005). In the 1970s, a series of stricter language policies, such as Bill 101, were enacted in the Quebec province. These policies have completely transferred Quebec from a bilingual society into a French monolingual one by restricting the development of English (Grenier, 2019).

Based on the report from the Government of Canada (2021), in the past three decades, new immigrants have become a pivotal part of the population growth. The new immigrants have occupied 80 percent of the primary growth of the Canadian population. Prior to COVID-19, Canada had on average accepted approximately 300,000 immigrants each year from 2010 to 2019, which partially influenced Canada demographics (Varrella, 2021). For example, in Quebec, the percentage of immigrants in the total population witnessed a growth from around 9% in 2001 to 15% in 2016 (Government of Canada, 2021).

Many researchers have suggested that an increasing global migration promoted the mobility of people and information and products, further influencing the language and linguistic diversity in certain regions (Kandel & Massey, 2002; Fishman, 2002; Yeoh & Willis, 2005; Joppke, 2007; Poynting & Mason, 2008; St-Laurent, 2008). As immigrants become a growing part of the population in Canada, the influence of these groups on language and society requires further attention. Therefore, the present study will explore the potential immigrants' attitudes towards French before they become official Canadian immigrants. Moreover, some factors, including the social context, individual's language proficiency and educational contact, will also be assessed to investigate their impact on attitudes towards the French language engagement.

The current research focuses on a potential Chinese immigrant group, which is the second largest immigrant group in Canada. Data was collected through an ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, followed by an analysis by SPSS and NVivo.

2. Literature

2.1. Language Attitude

This section will review existing body of research focused on language attitude, followed by an exploration of the significance of language attitudes in language action and maintenance. It aims to establish a foundation in the specific area of the current study.

2.1.1. An overview of Language Attitude

Language attitude refers to an individual's self-perception, faith, and emotions with regards to language uses and linguistic forms (Ryan et al., 1982; Hudson, 1996; Ladegaard, 2000; Garrett, 2010; Kroskrity, 2016). Understanding people's language attitude can further discover their reaction and perceptions to different languages or linguistic varieties such as accents (Edward, 1982; Gardner, 1985). Psychologists and linguists have observed at language attitude formation from cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Ostrom, 1969; Breckler, 1984). The cognitive component is related to a person's faith and belief towards the language and its social significance. The affective component focuses on an individual's feelings and emotions towards a language. The behavioural component is exhibited through people's real actions, intentions and decisions in the language acquisition process.

2.1.2. Language Attitudes and Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory

One of the important theories to gain an in-depth understanding of language attitudes is Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory. It studies how different ethnic groups perceive their ingroup or outgroups' language, cultures and communities (Hildebrandt & Giles, 1983; Giles & Johnson, 1987). A key tenet of this theory is that the group's subjective attitude can reflect and shape the objective linguistic vitality (Harwood et al, 1994). It means that personal perspectives and feelings are essential factors of the objective development of a language (Giles et al., 1977;). An important framework to explain this theory is from Social Identity framework illustrated by Tajfel (1974), who focuses on relation between social identity and cognitive process. According to Tajfel (1982), the first step in social identity theory, namely social categorization, enables individuals to define themselves and the world. Then, the second social identification process leads people to find proper ways to maintain a superior social and psychological identity with the dominant social groups. The last step people make the adjustment of their behavior to maintain a favourable social bond to the target language and culture context (Giles et al., 1977; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

The ethnolinguistic vitality theory has been widely used by researchers to investigate learners' subjective perceptions to languages (Bourhis et al, 1981; Kraemer, 1992; Gogonas & Michail, 2015). It offers an essential insight into communities' perceptions to the objective vitality of languages in different fields, such as institutional support of language in government and language social status in political and linguistic prestige (Giles & Rosenthal, 1985; Yagmur, 2009).

2.1.3. Language Attitudes and Language Behaviour

It is a generally accepted notion that knowing a person's attitude towards a language can predict their

language behaviours and actions (Gass & Seiter, 2018; Tönsing & Soto, 2020). From a cognitive orientation theory perspective, the social behaviour of human beings is guided by cognitive orientation, both consciously and unconsciously. The cognitive orientation of a person decides his or her mental process, which will eventually lead to their social actions (Kreidler & Kreidler, 1982).

Gardner and his colleagues explained the language attitudes and language behavior based on motivation theory (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner et al, 2004). They believe that the language attitude determines the language behavior via the construction of two types of motivations. One is instrumental motivation, in which the desire for second language (L2) learning is related to utilisation purpose, such as economic gains. The second is integrative motivation, in which the purpose of L2 learning is to become a member of the L2 group and integrate in more socio-cultural activities. Gardner (1985) suggests learners who have positive views and beliefs about culture activities of a particular language group will show greater integrative motivation towards that group; and invest more efforts in acquiring that language in the long-term (Pierce, 1995). Ultimately, this long-term investment brought by positive language attitude can also influence learners' language maintenance in a multicultural society. (Gardner, 1979, Abu-Rabia, 1999; Kuncha & Bathula, 2004; Abdalla, 2006).

2.1.4. Language Attitudes and Language Maintenance

Language maintenance is the preservation and protection of one language in a community where various languages are spoken (Baker, 2011). Linguistic research has revealed that individuals' language attitude can have an effect on language shift and language maintenance (Cooper & Fishman, 1974; Coupland, 2007; Dragojevic et al, 2018).

One theory explaining the process of language attitudes in language maintenance is based on accommodation theory put forth by Giles et al. (1991). In this theory, individuals can accommodate other people by adjusting their communicative actions to achieve the target role in different contexts (Trudgill & Giles, 1978). According to McGroarty (1996), languages existing in the society follow the process of accommodation. A group of people in a society may have a particular preference and attitude for other prestigious languages simply because they want to gain more social approval (Grosjean, 1984; West & Turner, 2013). Therefore, a favourable attitude towards a particular group's language will strengthen a high recognition of that language and that cultural community (Norton & Toohey, 2001). These people may adjust a convergent attitude to compromise themselves into the target community of the "prestigious" language. This attitude will lead a group of people to adapt themselves to the other language group and give up their own linguistic features or language (Thakerar et al., 1982; ardener & MacIntyre, 1991; Park & Sarkar, 2007), which will eventually result in a decreasing trend of a less powerful language in that society (Suek, 2014).

2.2. Factors that Influence Language Attitudes

Empirical studies have shown that attitude towards

language or linguistic variations is influenced by factors including but not limited to contact or exposure (Galloway & Rose, 2014; Dewi & Setiadi, 2018), society and cultures (Holliday, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2011; Baker, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019), familiarity and proficiency (Syed, 2003; Jenkins, 2009, 2015; Syrbe & Rose, 2018). The current study will mainly consider these three variables (socio-cultural influence, educational contact and language proficiency) that impact people's attitude towards the French.

2.2.1. Society and Culture influence

Vygotsky's (1962) sociocultural theory is fundamental in understanding the socio-cultural influence on people's language attitudes. According to this theory, individual mental activity is associated with external variation or social culture (Vygotsky, 1962, Wertsch, 1985; Vygotsky &

Reiber, 1999). A specific sociocultural model focusing on language attitudes is developed by Cargile et al. (1994), as is shown in Figure 1. According to Cargile et al. (1994), language does not exist in isolation; instead, it is affected by outside linguistic factors (Frauenglass & Diaz, 1985), including social situation, social interaction and speakers' dynamics. These factors will mitigate and reinforce people's language cognition, affection and conation, significantly shaping the interlocutors' language attitudes. Moreover, a final aspect of this model, 'outcome', visualizes the influence of social processes in people's minds. According to the change of cognition, conation and affection, interlocutors make the self-evaluation of the speech and adjust communication (convergent or divergent), eventually have extra actions and behaviour towards the specific languages (Lantolf, 1994).

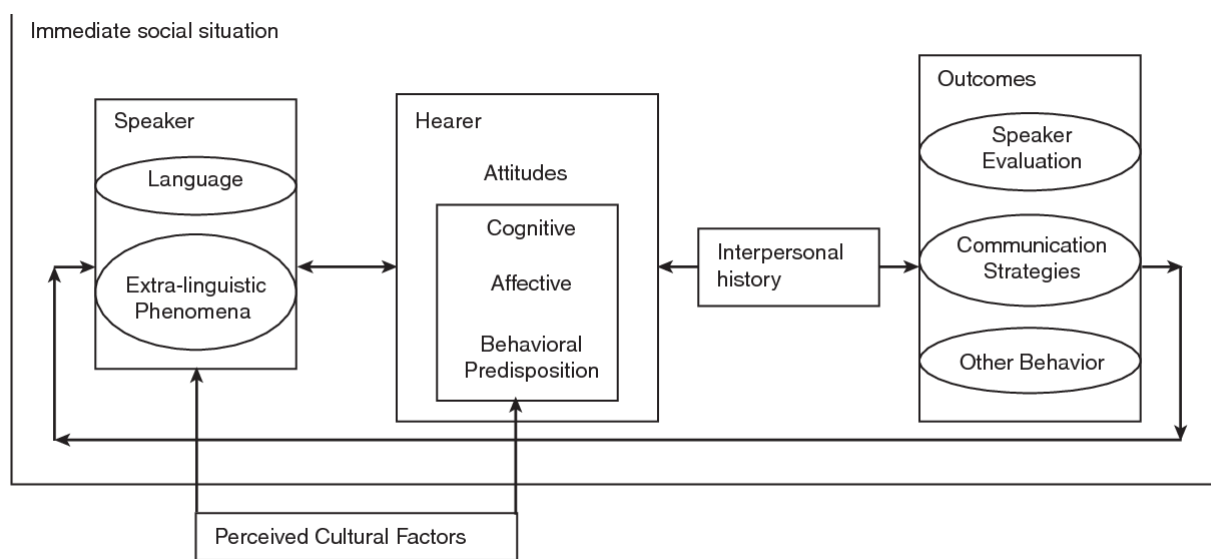


Figure 1: A social process model of language attitudes (adapted from Cargile et al. 1994, p. 214)

2.2.2. Proficiency

The term 'language proficiency' refers to the linguistic competence or knowledge of structural elements of language (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman & Palmer, 1982). A high level of language proficiency is an essential factor that enables people to become more confident and be more positive towards target language (Riestra & Johnson, 1964; Clement, 1978; Clement, 1980; Butler, 2004; Chacon, 2005).

One theory to understand this relation is regarding identity recognition. Language is a symbol of the belonging and identity (Bankson & Zhou, 1995); By their discourse, interlocutors identify themselves or are identified as members of a community, which contributed a recognition and develop an attachment to the language and target-group community (Portes, 2002; Hogg & Smith, 2008; Adamuti-Trache, 2012; Yu, 2015).

2.2.3. Education Contact

Another factor that influences individuals' language attitude is contact and familiarity (Amier, 1976; Galloway, 2017). Pettigrew (1998) believed that an increase in the exposure towards a target language in different situations will reduce people's prejudice towards that language, and

lead to a modification of their language behaviour, which can in turn cause a change in their language attitude (Pettigrew, 1998). Nevertheless, some researchers believe that insufficient time of educational exposure cannot affect individuals' cognition towards the language (e.g., Cziko & Lambert 1976; Peng, 2020).

Since not all studies show that educational contact with the target language can promote the people's attitude towards that language and community, it is worth investigating the impact of language exposure on potential immigrants' attitude towards different languages.

2.3. Gaps and Limitations of Previous Studies

Previous language attitudes studies in Canada have not yet empirically and thoroughly explored these potential immigrant applicants' language attitudes towards the French. According to Government of Canada (2021), immigrants have become the primary growth in the Canada population (80%), the influence brought by them has significantly affected Canadian cultural and language development (Oakes & Warren, 2007; Pagé & Lamarre, 2010;). Therefore, it is meaningful to examine pre immigrants' language attitudes to know their future language behaviour when they immigrate into Canada,

which offers insights to researchers and language policymakers.

In addition to a lack of studies focusing on knowing newcomers' language attitudes in Canada, there is no systematic investigations regarding the influence of different factors such as social culture influence, language contact and proficiency on newcomers' English and French attitudes. These factors have been significantly shaping people's attitudes towards the language, which should be further discussed.

2.4. The Present Study

Based on these gaps, the current study will firstly shed light on the language attitudes towards the French possessed by potential immigrants' applicants with the comparison to English. More specifically, it will explore their attitudes towards French present, future vitality, valorisation and goal vitality by using an ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire. Then, the correlation between language attitudes and different factors (e.g., language proficiency, social contexts differences and educational contact) will be analysed through SPSS. Moreover, in order to remedy the weakness of previous research, the second part of the research will examine these pre-immigrant's perspectives by collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews.

The target participants will specifically focus on Chinese groups (international students and workers). This is because that the number of immigrant Chinese has long been significantly overtaking those from Europe and most of Asian countries. It has become the second-largest immigrant source in Canada and fifth largest in Quebec (Annual Report, 2020). It requires further attention to know their perception of the two official languages. Moreover, compared to other groups such as the Indians or Haitian, where English or French is their native language, Chinese potential immigrant's native language (Mandarin) has not been influenced by English or French features. Therefore, focusing on Chinese group can avoid any native language influence and provide a more controlled and precise first step in evaluating how different Canadian social factors affect language attitudes for people with a neutral language background.

Based on the above discussion, the following research questions were formulated for the current study:

1. In comparison to the attitude to English, what are the potential Chinese immigrants' attitudes towards French?
2. What factors affect participants' attitudes towards French engagement (Goal vitality)?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A questionnaire survey was firstly selected to collect quantitative data about the language attitude towards French, as laid out in the research objectives. (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993; Rose, McKinley & Baffoe-Djan, 2019), followed by a semi-structured interview for qualitative data collection to enrich the research and

support the result of the quantitative data (Hashemi & Babaii, 2013).

3.2. Sampling

The target participants are potential Chinese immigrant applicants who live in Quebec and Ontario province. These participants are qualified for applying for immigration via the Economic Class Programme (e.g., international student stream, federal skilled workers, and Quebec economic classes).

The eligibility for these Economic Class Programme immigrants is assessed based on their educational and working experiences in Canada (Government of Canada, 2021), which means these participants must have academic and/or working experiences in Canada (Silverman, 2021). Therefore, the target participant group can be divided into international college Chinese students, Chinese workers in Canada, or these group who have applied for immigration but are awaiting their approval. Other immigrant applicant groups, such as family reunion members and protected persons from China, were not selected in this study. This is because these groups have no experience of the Canadian social and linguistic contexts; thus, it was deemed inappropriate to include them in current study aiming to explore cultural and social connections to language attitudes.

Questionnaires were administered to 125 Chinese participants in Canada, and 79 met the research criteria. 45 participants came from Quebec regions including city of Montreal, Laval, Sherbrooke, Quebec City where social activities are carried out almost in French. The rest of 34 were from Ontario province (e.g., city of Toronto, Hamilton, London Ontario, and Kingston) where English is more widely used. As is shown in Table 1, 78 participants met the research criteria in this study. One female participant in Quebec was excluded in data analysis because she has living experiences in both provinces, which may affect the research reliability.

Table 1: Participants Profiles

Type of Data	Division	Number
Questionnaire		N=78
Regions	Ontario province	N=34
	Quebec province	N=44
French course Experience	Yes	N=48
	No	N=30
French skill rating	Level 1	N=28
	Level 2	N=25
	Level 3	N=14
	Level 4	N=10
	Level 5	N=1

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

3.3.1. Quantitative Data Collection

A questionnaire was used in the quantitative data collection (Appendix B). The first part aims to investigate the participants' individual backgrounds in Canada. For example, participants should report their current status (worker status or students' status) in Canada, which ensure that participants are qualified for inclusion this

study (e.g., not tourist or protected status). Moreover, participants were required to answer relevant questions such as French course experience and proficiency in French.

The second questionnaire adopted the Belief about Ethnolinguistic Vitality questionnaire (BEVQ) developed by Allard and Landry (1986; 1987). The BEVQ is detailed and accurate because it explores multidimensional aspects of language attitude research, including participants' views about present and future vitality, general beliefs and language investment intentions (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1982; Allard & Landry, 1986; Stubbs, 1997).

Considering the pilot participants' reflections, the BEVQ questionnaire was modified, eventually generating 20 main questions, with 20 sub-questions for English and 20 sub-questions for French. It was intended to measure two main aspects with two sections in each: Exocentric belief (present vitality, future vitality) and egocentric belief (valorisation and goals). The subscales composing the BEVQ are described as follows:

- 1) **Present Vitality:** The first section of exocentric belief is present vitality in French and English. It is about a person's current perception of vitalities of the majority and minority language, based on three components of ethnolinguistic framework (institutional support, demographics, status).
- 2) **Future Vitality:** The second section of exocentric belief is future vitality. Participants were asked to predict the two languages' future development. The differences between present vitality and future vitality can also indicate the stability of the language vitality or future development.
- 3) **Valorisation:** It aims to find participants' perspectives regarding the importance of English and French. These questions are designed based on a concept of valorisation mechanism (Hamers & Blanc, 1982). In this framework, one prerequisite for a language's development is that people believe that the language is important to help achieve certain development (e.g., social and cognitive functioning).
- 4) **Goal:** The Goal aims to discover on participants' attitudes towards the language investment in English and French (e.g., acquisition). This is based on the cognitive orientation in which the behaviour intention is an essential element of people's beliefs and perceptions (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1982).

3.3.2. Qualitative Data Collection

Following Dornyei's (2007) guideline of the semi-structured interview, question items were designed prior to conducting the interviews, which leads to a more structured, organized discussion with flexibility to further explore (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). The data was gained directly from the natural discourse, illustrating what the participants' real experience feelings about French (Gillham, 2000). The answers from the interviewees were analysed thematically to give insights into the outcome of participants' language attitudes.

Interview questions were mainly developed based on Johnson's (2012) questionnaire which explores participants' language attitudes and motivation towards French language and involvement in Francophone culture.

Briefly, the interview questions were divided into their perception towards the French development, and the importance of French and how different factors affect their attitudes towards French. A pilot study was also run to check validity, ensuring answer can deliver deep information (Schoonen, 2006). Finally, five questions were generalized (Appendix D).

Qualitative data were collected through online synchronous interviews. In this study, Microsoft Teams was used in this study with average 15 minutes for each participant.

3.4. Ethical Issues

This study has been approved by The Central Oxford University Research Ethics Committee 2021. The interview and questionnaire data will be stored for three years. The whole process was conducted in line with the ethical guidance from the University of Oxford.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability of the Adjusted Version of the BEVQ Questionnaires

Before proceeding with the data analysis, the reliability of the redesigned questions was examined (see Appendix E), ensure that the results are not affected by potential extraneous factors.

Table 2 displays the reliability coefficient for the sub-questions of the BEVQ range between .894 and .936. The general acceptable level of the Cronbach alpha α is above 0.7 whereas above 0.8 is a good level (Eisinga et al., 2013). Hence, no items needed to be excluded. Based on the score attained, the reliability can be considered highly acceptable. The table below depicts the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the modified BEVQ questionnaire.

Table 2: Reliability of BEVQ

Division of BEVQ	Alpha coefficient	Item (N=40)
Present Vitality in English	.934	6
Present Vitality in French	.910	6
Future Vitality in English	.932	6
Future Vitality in French	.936	6
Valorization in English	.911	4
Valorization in French	.917	4
Goal in English	.894	4
Goal in French	.920	4

Note: The table below depicts the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the modified BEVQ questionnaire.

4.2. Distribution of Normality

The skewness values of dependent variables Valorisation of English and Goal of English were -2.96 and -2.76 respectively, indicating a non-normal distribution with negative skewness (Curran et al., 1996; Bryne, 2010; Kline, 2011). Therefore, a non-parametric analysis was required when using data from these two sub-sections. For the rest of the subsections, the values were in the range of -1.96 to +1.96, satisfying the requirement of the normality

distribution.

4.3. Quantitative Results: Research Question 1

T-test and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test were used to

investigate general language attitudes, followed by a use of an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney U-test to explore their attitudes based on different regions.

4.3.1. General Attitudes towards English versus French

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for beliefs towards French and English

		English			French			<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>W</i>
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Exocentric beliefs	Present Vitality	78	6.47	2.34	78	5.20	1.98	<.001	2.71	/
	Future Vitality	78	6.64	2.27	78	4.81	2.46	<.001	3.57	/
Egocentric beliefs	Valorization	78	8.35	1.19	78	3.54	2.32	<.001	/	86.5
	Goal	78	8.20	1.45	78	3.26	2.18	<.001	/	94

A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the general attitudes differences between English and French for the present and future vitality. Table 3 shows that participants have significantly higher attitudes towards the exocentric belief of English than that of French; for present vitality, $t(77) = 2.71, p < .008$; for future vitality, $t(77) = 3.57, p < .001$.

Since Valorization and Goal vitality are not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed rank test was conducted to compare the differences between these two sections. As presented, the score of French valorizations is significantly

lower than that of English $W(78) = 86.5, z = -7.30, p < .001$. Likewise, the goal vitality of French is also significantly lower than that of English $W(78) = 94, z = -7.20, p < .001$.

4.3.2. Attitude towards English versus French in Ontario and Quebec

Table 4 depicts the comparison between the two types of beliefs of ethnolinguistic vitality in English and French of potential Chinese immigrant groups in Ontario and Quebec.

Table 4: Beliefs towards French and English in each province

		Quebec Province			Ontario Province			<i>p</i>	
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Exocentric beliefs	Present Vitality	English	44	4.66	1.45	34	8.81	0.32	<.001
		French	44	6.60	2.35	34	3.38	1.43	<.001
	Future Vitality	English	44	4.93	2.53	34	8.83	0.42	<.001
		French	44	6.65	1.25	34	2.43	1.29	<.001
Egocentric beliefs	Valorization	English	44	7.86	1.41	34	8.96	0.10	<.001
		French	44	4.76	2.22	34	1.94	1.19	<.001
	Goal	English	44	7.63	1.73	34	8.93	0.19	<.001
		French	44	4.43	2.04	34	1.74	1.17	<.001

*1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree

Present vitality: Independent tests were conducted to check present vitality. For English vitality between two provinces. The Levine's test showed the equal variances are not assumed ($F = 31.45, p < .001$). The result illustrated a significant difference of English present vitality between Quebec ($M = 4.67, SD = 1.46$) and Ontario province ($M = 8.81, SD = 0.32, t(48.36) = -18.28, p < .001, 95\% CI [-4.60, -3.69]$) with a mean difference of 4.15 where Ontario is higher than Quebec. Also, a significant difference is discovered in French present vitality between two regions. The Levine's test showed the equal variances are assumed ($F = 31.45, p = 8.45$); and there is significant difference in the reported French present vitality $t(76) = 12.14, p < .001, 95\% CI [2.69, 3.75]$ with a mean difference 3.22 where Quebec is higher than Ontario.

Future vitality: The Levine test illustrated that the equal variances are not assumed ($F = 36.39, p < .001$). A significant difference was found between Quebec ($M = 4.93, SD = 2.53$) and Ontario in English future vitality (M

$= 8.83, SD = 0.42, t(51.11) = -16.05, p < .001, 95\% CI [-4.38, -3.41]$). In contrast, Quebec ($M = 6.65, SD = 1.25$) is significantly higher than Ontario ($M = 2.43, SD = 1.29$) in terms of future vitality of French $t(76) = -14.35, p < .001, 95\% CI [3.64, 4.80]$.

Valorization vitality: Mann-Whitney was used to compare the English Valorization vitality since it is not normally distributed. It illustrates that Ontario (54.59) has significantly higher mean rank than that of Quebec (27.84) on the test of English valorization vitality, $U = 235, p < .001, z = -5.63, r = -0.37$, which according to Cohen (2011), is a medium effect size. For the French Valorization vitality, the independent test shows Quebec people's perception towards the French vitality is significantly higher than that from Ontario people. According to the analysis, the Levine test shows that the equal variances are not assumed ($F = 16.10, p < .001, t(68.68) = 7.18, p < .001, 95\% CI [2.06, 3.60]$).

Goal vitality: Mann-Whitney was used to analyze

English Goal vitality due to its negative skewness. It found a significant difference between Ontario (mean rank = 55.29) and Quebec (mean rank = 27.30), $U = 211, p < .001, z = -5.77, r = -.39$. Moreover, a significant difference was also discovered between Ontario and Quebec's potential Chinese immigration applicants with respect to goal subscales of French. The Levine test indicates that the equal variances are not assumed ($F = 23.99, p < .001, t(70.69) = 7.131, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.96, 3.43]$).

4.4. Quantitative Results: Research Question 2

For the second research question, a multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis was employed to answer whether different factors (different sociocultural contexts, language proficiency, educational contact) influence people's attitudes towards the French language valorisation.

A significant regression equation was found. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) confirmed that the model can be used to predict people's attitudes towards the

French language: $F(3, 74) = 22.646, p < .001$, with an R^2 of 0.479. According to the results in Table 5, the participants' language attitudes towards the French Goal (language investment) were not significantly impacted by whether they have French Course $B = -.52, t = -1.04, p = .30, 95\% CI [-1.52, .48]$ Beta = $-.12$. However, it was mediated by Current Province $B = 1.96, t = 4.29, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.05, 2.87]$ Beta = $.449$ and Language Proficiency $B = .85, t = 3.64, p < .001, 95\% CI [0.39, 1.32]$ Beta = $.417$. The language attitude of potential Chinese immigrant applicants in Goal of French is equal to $0.709 + 1.961$ (Current Province) + 0.851 (French Skills' Self-Rating) - 0.51 (Whether Have French Language Course), where Current Province was coded as Quebec = 1, Ontario = 2; and French Skills' Self-Rating was coded from 1 to 5. The participants' attitudes in French Goal (e.g., investment in French acquisition and related activities) increased 0.851 for each level growth of French proficiency and Quebec participants are 1.961 times positive towards the French Goal than people in Ontario.

Table 5: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Correlations			
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	.709	.400		1.773	.080			
	Sociocultural differences	1.961	.457	.449	4.286	.000	.617	.446	.360
	Education Contact	-.521	.500	-.117	-1.041	.301	.382	-.120	-.087
	French Skill Self-Rating	.851	.234	.417	3.636	.001	.591	.389	.305

a. Dependent Variable: Goal of French

b. Predictors: (Constant), French skill rating, Current province (sociocultural differences), whether having French language course or course taught by French in Canada (Educational contact)

4.5. Qualitative Results

The use of thematic analysis is driven by grounded theory which includes the critical review of answers to find related coding and identify common views and themes from these codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then researchers analyse the themes and report the themes based on the data from the results. The data were firstly transcribed and reviewed by the researcher, followed by identifying and generating new codes through an online software NVivo 1.4.

The themes presented in this part fall into five main focuses: 1) Future Development of French, 2) Importance of French in New Chinese Immigrant Groups, 3) French Engagement, 4) French Course Evaluation, and 5) French Proficiency.

4.5.1. Attitudes towards the Future Development of French

The target interview group had similar perceptions about Future French Development in Quebec, with all participants (N = 9) responding that French will have more vitality in the Quebec region in the future. Nevertheless, eight participants expressed that they believe that the development of French in future is not promising, while

one participant was unsure about the same.

Theme 1: Community influence (Frequency = 6)

Community influence can be one of the important factors to decide vitality in Quebec province. Newcomers in Quebec have a stable amount of interaction in French, which facilitates French development in future in Quebec. Participant (4255682) claimed the following:

...so it has a population of 8 million in Montreal, and a population of 5 million in the countryside, in small towns, 95% of the population in small towns speak French... it has an inertia... so, this kind of development is stable because this society has not come into contact with many foreigners.

Community influence is also the reason why participants believe that French will lose its vitality in future in Canada. The participants surmise that French is not required for the social interaction in the country to a large extent. For example, one participant (4282023) said,

Most people in Ontario or Canada speak English. Currently, social contexts have no effects on my language attitudes towards the French... Only a small part of people speaks French, it loses the development of French.

Theme 2: Government Practices (Frequency = 4)

Participants also believe that government practices will ensure the development of French in Quebec. The

government has implemented different kinds of policies to facilitate the use of French in the region. One participant (4264251), who believes that French will have more vitality in Quebec, claimed the following:

.... Quebec government has spent a lot of time and money in promoting or facilitating people to learn French... Quebec government.... pay for the students, for our tuition fee.... So, I think it's a good side for pushing French culture and the French learning language in Quebec.

4.5.2. Attitudes towards French Engagement

Five participants expressed different concerns which may negatively affect their French involvement. The most frequent one is the "difficulties of French" (Frequency = 4). For example:

"...all of my friends are English dominant. I am not sure whether they can understand because of French is not easy to learn..." (4292482)

"French is too hard; I took related French activities but dropped soon." (4282023)

4.5.3. Importance of French

Theme 3: Professional Requirements for the Language

The responses of nine participants reveals that "professional requirement for the language" (Frequency = 9) is the main reason whether they believe French is important for new Chinese immigrant groups, such as one participant's (4260223) comment:

I think it does, especially in Quebec...., because in those areas, some job positions, you need to speak French to get a job.....so I think it's very important.

For participants who believe that French is not essential for Chinese groups, it is noted that the current or future job language requirements are also strongly correlated with their attitudes towards the importance of the language. One participant claimed,

"Actually no, English is more popular and important for us. Everybody can speak English; they speak more English in career and personal life....job opportunities are all English. We don't need to work in French..." (4258430)

4.5.4. The Evaluation of Influence of French Language Course

Many participants expressed their frustrations with their French language learning experiences in Canada (Frequency = 7). Monolingual teaching approach (Frequency = 7) represents a main theme for potential Chinese immigrant groups' perception towards the French language course:

"...French is too hard.... but sometimes if the professor insists on using French to teach you some very complicated stuff..." (Interviewee 4260223).

Interviewee (4255682) also states an example, indicating the negative effects of the French-only teaching approach:

"..... complicated conjugation of verbs. It means that when you learn this course... you don't know how to write verbs... Not very comfortable about this kind of

strategy. This kind of interaction cause bad effects."

4.5.5. The evaluation of language proficiency on language attitudes

In total, all interviewees agreed that language proficiency significantly affects people's attitudes towards French. Two themes were found from this question.

Theme 1: instrumental benefits (Frequency = 7)

According to participants' answers, a high-level of French proficiency brings more instrumental benefits (Frequency = 7) in different aspects, especially career path, which promotes them to have a more positive attitudes towards French. As one participant (4258430) indicated: "[high proficiency] increase my confidence and then as a result I would like to speak more French because it's my strength and for job hunting...."

Theme 2: social recognition and integration (Frequency = 8)

Many participants claimed that having a high level of French proficiency enables individuals to have a recognition of and integration into the French culture and community: For example:

"...A French ability will definitely help you do a better immerse yourself in the culture and the communities, which will make you happier..." (4260223)

"...If you speak fluent French, you can do anything. You know, that's what motivates you to go faster, to go to any aspects of the of the society. You know, you can you can dive into it" (4259835)

5. Discussion

5.1. Summary of Research Finding

Research question 1: What are the potential Chinese immigrants' attitudes towards French? in comparison to English?

The results found that potential Chinese immigrants hold on an averagely more positive attitude towards English than French in terms of present and future vitality. Nevertheless, with respects to different regions, the findings suggest that Chinese groups in Quebec (Francophone dominance) and Ontario (Anglophone dominance) do not share the same attitudes towards the current language vitality and development: (1) Both agreed that English vitality would continue to increase in the future in each region (2) but they largely disagreed about future French development in each province, with an increase expected by participants in Quebec but decrease expected by participants in Ontario.

In terms of valorisation and goal vitality, the results showed that the Chinese have more favourable attitudes towards English speakers. Also, both Ontario and Quebec participants showed significantly more positive attitudes towards the English language than French.

Research question 2: What factors affect participants' belief towards French engagement (Goal vitality)?

Participants' goal vitality towards French is significantly affected by social contexts and language proficiency. However, the educational contact (whether

participants have taken up a French course before) has no effects on participants' attitudes towards French goal beliefs (French engagement)

5.2. Attitudes towards French

5.2.1. Attitudes towards Present and Future Vitality

With regards to different regions, Quebec and Ontario groups' different attitudes towards the present vitality of English and French are consistent with Allard and Landry's (1992) investigations into individuals' subjective beliefs towards present vitality based on province. In current study, the potential Chinese group's perception of present vitality of French is corresponding with the current primary language use in each province, with a significant higher in Quebec than that in Ontario. This supports the previous studies that individual perceptions of the language are correlated with the objective local language situation (Giles et al., 1985; Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

In contrast to participants in Ontario, Quebec Chinese believe that French will continue to gain more future vitality in Canada and Quebec region. However, groups in the low-Francophone areas (Ontario) anticipate negative French development. Based on thematic analysis, language policy and community influence are two possible factors influencing French future vitality. In Quebec's case with the ultimate goal of promoting French use, the current French culture and language community have replaced English ones and become dominant in that Quebec (Government of Canada, 2021; Simon, 2021). Especially after Quebec Autonomist Party (Coalition Avenir Québec) gaining the majority seat in 2018, the party is more eager to establish people's emotional attachment to French language development by implementing series of strict policies, such as Bill 96, to avoid English use in most communities (Simon, 2021). Thus, individuals in current Quebec society perceived that they cannot avoid the use or exposure of French in Quebec in future.

Another phenomenon in the current research is that participants frequently pointed out the importance of a language policy of French development in particular. It should be noted that these temporary residents are not native members and have less connection to the local government and authority, but they still frequently pointed out the effectiveness of the French policy on linguistic development. In addition to a growing trend of strict government practices, another possible reason is that the current new language policies are closely related to new immigrants and heavily affect their immigration process. For example, a new policy in July 2021 stipulates that if people who have spouses want to apply for immigration in Quebec, their spouses must achieve a minimum of level 4 on the Quebec Scale of Proficiency in French (Miekus, 2021). As a result, these government measures significantly draw more attention from temporary residents than other groups. This argument can also be supported by Page and Olivier (2012). They found young immigrants are the main focus of the Quebec governmental language policy, and thus they have more reflected social desirability and perception affected by the targeted governmental efforts.

5.2.2. Valorisation and Goal vitality in overall Canada and

Quebec

Scores for both general valorisation (Importance) and goal (Engagement) vitality sections are significantly higher for English than French. Also, while French now seems to hold a higher vitality in Quebec than Ontario, the questionnaire results illustrate that both Ontario and Quebec respondents believe that English has more valorisation and goal vitality than French.

Based on the ethnolinguistic vitality framework, these findings suggest that the potential Chinese immigrant applicants, regardless of their local objective ethnolinguistic vitality, think English is more important for them. Also, they prefer to invest more efforts in English-related activities and language acquisition than in French. These findings contradict Kircher's study (2014), which indicated that the perceptions of the status of French significance were facilitated and improved among both immigrants and native Quebec Canadians following Bill 101.

This inconsistency may be due to the nature of the present employment situation in Canada. "Language requirement for the job" is an essential factor influencing their evaluation of language importance and engagement. Evidence for this comes from the interview data: When asked about language importance, eight participants illustrated that English is sufficient and more critical for their career development. They did not foresee any significant possibility of French providing them with better career opportunities. It confirms that English is the leading social and economic language tool in North America. As potential immigrant applicants reflect, French is a powerful language but not a necessary one. English continues to be a pivotal communicative instrument in public and private use in North America and the whole world, thereby deserving further attention and effort in its development. This statement is concurrent with Galloway and Rose's (2014) demonstration, in which English has more value than other languages in many fields, such as business, communication, education and scientific advancement. Therefore, it is unsurprising that these participants regard English as more critical in career possibilities and are willing to explore more English activities (Spolsky, 1989).

In addition to "professional requirement", participants also illustrated other reasons, including complexities of the French language, lack of interest, and no benefits. Based on these interview answers, it is possible to say these Chinese potential immigrants' perspectives towards the French importance and engagement are more instrumentally motivated. This is because their attitude tends to be positive only when they see the utilitarian benefits (Gardner and Masgoret, 1991).

Despite more positive attitudes towards English in both regions, the mean score of French in valorisation and goal vitality was slightly higher in Quebec than that in Ontario, indicating that the Quebec group expressed more preference for French involvement and considered French to be more important compared to the Ontario group. This difference can be explained by the social categorisation and comparison theory referred to in the literature section. Based on Tajfel's (1974) explanation, these processes significantly influence individuals' perceptions to different

groups in society. In Quebec's context, the legitimacy and stability of the dominance of French evokes a positive "social relation and connection" to the other group (Giles, Bourhis & Talyor, 1977; Taifel & Turner, 1979; Bourhis & Sachdev, 1984). Under the framework of categorisation and comparison, perception of lower status and lack of political power of English in Quebec promotes potential Chinese immigrants to pursue adequate recognition from a more valued dominant French group. Thus, they had cognitive alternatives towards the culture and language to increase the adaptation, and gradually become more positive towards French language in this context. Likewise, the dominance of English in Ontario fosters a need to seek future identity within English-speaking group, explaining why they have significantly positive attitudes towards the English valorisation and goal vitality but low perception towards that of the French.

5.3. Additional Findings from the Research

5.3.1. Conflicting Attitudes between Exocentric Beliefs and Egocentric Beliefs.

It was unexpected to discover that Quebec participants' attitudes towards French development (exocentric belief) did not align with their attitudes towards French importance and language engagement (egocentric belief). Briefly, although the Quebec Chinese group displayed a more favourable perception towards the development of French in Quebec, they demonstrated a relatively lower interest towards the French learning compared than their attitudes towards English involvement.

This finding is contrary to previous ethnolinguistic vitality studies (e.g., Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Ma, 2015), which found participants attitudes towards exocentric beliefs corresponding with the exocentric beliefs. One theory to explain this phenomenon is from cognitive dissonance framework (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance is a social psychological concept that refers to a mental conflict when an individual's belief towards an event does not correspond with their actions (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). Cognitive dissonance does not naturally occur; instead, this psychological inconsistency is caused by different factors, such as the difficulties and belief contradiction (Wicklund & Brehm, 1976).

This framework can provide a clearer and more straightforward explanation of the current language attitude study. Based on the qualitative results, participants who have favourable views towards French may encounter difficulties in using or acquiring it in real communication. Subsequently, they evaluated it negatively and develop a contradictory attitude (negative) towards the engagement with the French languages.

5.3.2. Chinese's Attitudes and Motivation to French Language Engagement

As mentioned in literature, motivation is an essential component associated with language attitude (Crookall, 1987; Pierce, 1995). Furthermore, researchers have clearly illustrated that the language involvement in cultural integration largely connects to the integrative motivation rather than instrumental motivation (Kurtoglu-Hooton & Wright, 2006; MacIntyre & Blackie, 2012; Hong &

Ganapathy, 2017).

However, based on the interviews, most participants in this research claimed that they have a more negative perception towards French, simply because their target employment position (professional requirement) may not require its use. Also, these Chinese groups have a stronger instrumental motivation perspective to acquire and be involved in language study and activities. This finding is consistent with studies that found a lack of integrative motivation in language learning among Asian countries, such as Japan and China (Warden & Lin, 2000; Jones, 2006; Wei, 2007; Kato, 2016). The reason can be attributed to cultural differences. Integrative motivation is closely associated with the acceptance of a new cultural norm. As Dörnyei (2003) indicated, a high level of integrative motivation is connected to a positive affection towards the target language group and willingness to become a community member of similar value. However, the cultural typology between western culture and Asians (e.g., Chinese) has clear differences, which impedes them from developing integrative motivation and positive attitudes for a new type of language or cultural learning (Hofstede, 1984; Mintu, 1992). Therefore, they show limited positive or even negative perception towards the importance of French and future engagement due to a lack of utilitarian (or instrumental) value (Bai, 2006).

5.4. The Influence of Three Factors on towards French Goal Vitality

5.4.1. Sociocultural Factor

Bourhis et al. (1981) proposed the Subjective ethnolinguistic vitality hypothesis, accounting for people's cognitive representations of the sociocultural factors that influence community relationships. The finding of the present study supports this hypothesis by showing that sociocultural differences significantly influence people's attitudes towards goal vitality. Specifically, participants from Francophone-dominant social contexts (Quebec province) have a significantly higher positive perception towards French language engagement than people from Ontario, a dominant Anglophone region.

This result is consistent the social process model of language attitudes, mentioned in the literature review section. The model illustrates that people's cognition, affection, and conation for a language is adaptive to social contexts and interactions (Cargile et al., 1994). The construction of Chinese participants attitudes towards French engagement can be considered an "ecological relationship" or mutual orientation with the local French community (Atkinson et al., 2007). For example, based on the interview, participants illustrated that a trend of series of policy implement may bring a high vitality of French in Quebec in the future. These strict practices and large exposure of French in Quebec would affect people's cognition and drive them to reconsider their attitudes towards the French language.

5.4.2. Language Proficiency

The study indicates a positive correlation between the target group's proficiency in French and attitudes towards French engagement, which is consistent with previous studies that have found that a high level of language skill

contributes to a positive perception towards that language (Gardner et al., 1983; Clément, Noels & Deneault, 2001; Butler, 2004; Chacon, 2005; Adamuti-Trache, 2012). Based on participants' answers, knowing how to use French proficiently can help them be more involved in cultural activities and thereby facilitate their understanding and perception of the target language. This response reflects the findings of previous studies in other languages (Bankson & Zhou, 1995; Adamuti-Trache, 2012; Yu, 2015). For example, Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006) suggests that high proficiency enables students to be more confident to attend target-language events, which improve their appreciation for the target language, culture and social community.

The qualitative data also offers valuable information regarding attitudes based on perceived identity and language proficiency. Participants claimed that a high proficiency brings more integration and commitment in the French community, which in turn improves their attitudes. Consistent with previous studies, the mutual association between language level and community directly promotes individuals to psychologically adjust their perception of French use, identity, and engagement (Bankson & Zhou, 1995; Portes, 2002; Hogg & Smith, 2008). This can break people's stereotypes and develop dynamic attitudes and attention towards the new social norm, which refers to French in this study.

5.4.3. Education Contact

Although a positive relationship between education contact and language attitudes has previously been found (Hofman & Zak, 1969; Littlewood, 2001; Pauwels, 2005), the result of this research indicates that educational contact has no effect on participants' attitudes towards language engagement. Based on the interview responses, their dissatisfaction with the French courses was the reason that discouraged their interest and motivation to learn French. This finding supports Kormos (2009)'s research, in which negative experiences in foreign language lessons may decrease learners' engagement in that language.

Furthermore, based on the qualitative analysis, "monolingual teaching approach" explain why participants have low attitudes in goal vitality. Some difficult features, including French liaison, direct objects pronouns, can be complicated to be acquired by allophone learners (Mady & Arnett, 2015; Housen & Simoens, 2016). In this situation, only using the monolingual teaching may cause them to struggle to the French learning, which demotivates their further involvement in the future (Keshavarz, 2014, Oxford, 2016). This finding is concurrent with previous studies which suggest that the monolingual approach (French immersion) may cause learning difficulties and anxieties for learners (e.g., Thordardottir et al., 1997; Laufer & Hader, 1997; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Keshavarz, 2014; Brown, 2021). For example, Macaro and Lee (2013) found that monolingual teaching is less effective for young beginners to communicate and comprehensively gain sufficient input due to the lack of knowledge background, which cause these people to have negative attitudes towards the language learning.

5.5. Limitations of the Research

Despite its potential significance of the finding, this research has its limitations, mainly due to the adjusted questionnaires, issues for thematic analysis, and additional factors

5.5.1. Questionnaire

The first limitation is regarding the shortened version of the ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire. Although the questionnaire was analysed and shows high reliability for the present research, it may not ensure the precise evaluation of the "potential immigrants' attitudes" based on three dimensions (institutional support, demographics and status). Moreover, participants in the pilot study expressed negative attitudes towards the use of a standardised test to measure their French proficiency. Therefore, a self-evaluation test was adopted in the present study. However, the self-evaluation test has long been criticised as not being sufficiently objective enough to reveal the participants' true abilities (Andrade, 2019), making it a weakness of this research.

5.5.2. Additional Factors

Research Question 2 found educational contact has no effects on attitudes towards French goal vitality. However, one limitation of this study is that it did not compare the length of language course among these participants. As Dörnyei & Csizér (2005) suggested (2.2.3), learners' attitudes and motivation towards the language may follow the "U-model" trend with a decrease at an early stage but an increase at later stage. As such, it is unclear whether the result accurately reflects the influence of the educational contact (language course) on attitudes towards the French engagement because learners who were in different stages of course (e.g., beginning stage or later stage) may have different perceptions towards the language engagement.

5.6. Potential Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

5.6.1. Attention to the Immigrants' Attitudes

Notably, in this study, both Ontario and Quebec Chinese participants showed less favourable attitudes towards French importance and engagement than English. According to the accommodation theory, social groups may have stronger convergent accommodative attitude (feelings of attachment) for a particularly prestigious or dominant language in a multilingual society (McGroarty, 1996). The ultimate result is that a non-dominant language might die in that multilingual context (Giles et al., 1991). This might be one of the reasons why French usage and the percentage of French speakers in Canada show a declining trend in recent decades (Amireault, 2019).

In light of the fact that immigrants account for the primary population growth (80%) in Canada, researchers and policymakers should pay more attention to the potential immigrant's group's language attitudes. This is because after they officially immigrate to Canada, their attitudes may directly determine their language use in their workplaces and daily lives, eventually affecting Canada's language demographics. Moreover, additional investigation is needed to expand to other immigrant

groups' attitudes and the underlying reasons for their perception.

5.6.2. Development of Integrative Motivation

As shown in Chapter two, previous studies have highlighted the important relationship between integrative motivation and language development. Nevertheless, in this study, participants show a lower integrative motivation in French engagement. Their type of motivation towards French learning are more likely based on instrumental benefits.

Therefore, to improve students' integrative motivation, amendments in instructors' perspectives on motivation, educational pedagogy, and cultural activities are required to facilitate a more appealing French-learning atmosphere (Lasagabaster, 2017). For example, since integrative motivation is strongly correlated with social value and cultural materials (Ajibade & Ndububa, 2008), adopting more study materials related to current and personally relevant content of Quebec French could effectively promote students' integrative motivation and drive them to be consistent in their French activity involvement, with the goal of achieving success (Brown, 1994; 1991; Williams & Burden, 1997, Dörnyei, 2001).

5.6.3. Reconsidering about the Language Teaching

Negative language learning experiences damage students' self-confidence and contribute to learning anxieties and an eventual loss of learning interest (Kormos et al., 2009). Monolingual immersion teaching method used in Canada has caused difficulties for learners to understand the course content fully. Since Canada has a considerable number of new immigrants who came from diverse language backgrounds (Cummins, 2014), researchers should reconsider a more effective pedagogy to overcome the issues of the monolingual approach.

This study suggest that researchers emphasise the use of learners' existing plurilingual resources and repertoires to facilitate learners' multilingual meaning-making and acquisition processes effectively. For example, one of the possible approaches is translanguaging pedagogy (García & Li, 2014; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015, Li, 2018), a language teaching approach that allows learners to use different available languages, modes, and lived experiences to support second/foreign language acquisition. Under this instruction, French learners can be encouraged to use their currently available language resources, such as both their native language and English, in activities that involve different modes (e.g., linguistic, audio, visual, bodily, spatial) to meet their needs in French learning. It is feasible to adopt such practices in the Canadian French teaching contexts to help learners who tend to come from diverse first languages backgrounds (Makalela, 2015). Ultimately, this will help reduce learners' stress, strengthen linguistic awareness and proficiency through the translanguaging pedagogy, and improve students' attitudes towards the target language learning (Corcoll, 2013; Galante, 2020).

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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