Navigating Linguistic Identities: ESL Teaching Contexts in Quebec

Caroline Riches & Philippa Parks

"I'm actually Francophone! . . . But they still saw me as an Anglophone, even though I'm not at all."

Linguistic identity is deeply embedded in how individuals identify within groups and cultures (Gee, 2000; Sachs, 2005). The contexts of English as a second language (ESL) teaching in Quebec and ESL teachers' range of linguistic repertoires provide an interesting landscape for considering issues of identity, equity, and acceptance (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Norton, 2014). Through surveys, interviews and focus groups with pre- and in-service ESL teachers, we explore how language and professional identities develop through the lens of French/English identity intersections and acceptance in these teaching contexts. Our findings show a pattern that is unique to the ESL Quebec context: In French-language schools it is often how an ESL teacher's linguistic identity is seen, rather than how they self-identify that appears to be essential to their success in integrating into teaching communities. Our research has important implications for our understanding of the ways ESL teachers' linguistic identities are performed and accepted within plurilingual contexts of teaching.

« En fait, je suis francophone! . . . Mais ils me voient encore comme anglophone, même si je ne le suis pas du tout. »

L'identité linguistique est profondément ancrée dans la façon dont les personnes s'identifient au sein des groupes et des cultures (Gee, 2000; Sachs, 2005). Les contextes de l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue seconde (ALS) au Québec et l'éventail du répertoire linguistique des enseignants d'ALS fournissent un paysage intéressant pour envisager les questions d'identité, d'équité et d'acceptation (De Costa et Norton, 2017; Norton, 2014). Par l'entremise de sondages, d'entrevues et de groupes de discussion auprès des enseignants en service et des enseignants en formation d'ALS, nous explorons comment les identités langagières et professionnelles se forment par le prisme des intersections identitaires et de l'acceptation au sein de ces contextes d'enseignement. Nos résultats montrent un schéma qui est unique au contexte de l'ALS au Québec : dans

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les écoles francophones, il s'agit souvent de la manière dont l'identité linguistique de l'enseignant d'ALS est perçue plutôt que de la façon dont ils s'identifient qui semble être essentielle pour réussir à s'intégrer dans les communautés enseignantes. Notre recherche comporte des implications importantes pour notre compréhension des façons dont les identités linguistiques des enseignants d'ALS sont réalisées et acceptées au sein de contextes d'enseignements plurilingues.

Keywords: *Language teacher identity, second language education, resilience, teaching English as a second language, Quebec*

Teacher shortages are a concern worldwide (Viac & Fraser, 2020) and Canada is no exception to this situation (Schaefer et al., 2021). Attracting and retaining certified teachers—especially in subject areas such as English as a second language (ESL) and French as a second language (FSL)—is a preoccupation of governments, school administrators, and researchers alike (French & Collins, 2011, 2014; Gouvernement du Québec, 2018; Kutsyuruba & Tregunna, 2014). The Quebec Ministry of Education, for example, has recently enacted a plan to address teacher shortages by providing funding to students to finish their teacher education programs (Gouvernement du Québec, 2018). The problem of teacher shortages is exacerbated by the increasing tendency of teachers to leave the profession early. Second language teachers across Canada are especially vulnerable to this trend with 47% of ESL teachers in Quebec, and 39% of FSL teachers across Canada, reporting that they had seriously considered leaving the field (French & Collins, 2014).

Research has identified general factors that contribute to teacher attrition such as lack of support (den Broke et al., 2017; Towers & Maguire, 2017), lack of job security (Kolterman's, 2017; Newberry & Alsip, 2017; Swanson, 2010; 2012), and work/life balance (Newberry & all sop, 2017; Towers & Maguire, 2017). Resilience and retention, in turn, have been linked to strong teacher identity (Hong, 2010), teacher self-efficacy (Hong, 2012; Swanson, 2012), a sense of belonging, relationships with students, and relational support from colleagues (Schaefer et al. 2021). These factors contributing to resilience and retention have inspired our research and formed the basis of our investigation of how pre-service and in-service ESL teachers navigate their linguistic identities in the Quebec context.

There are parallels to be drawn between the position of FSL teachers across Canada and ESL teachers in Quebec—as FSL teachers teach French in English language schools, while Quebec ESL teachers teach English in French language schools[1]. We argue, however, that the situation of ESL teachers in Quebec is nuanced and complicated by the historical language

1 This is in fact the topic and focus of our larger study.

tensions in Quebec and the protectionist stance of the Quebec government with respect to the French language. In addition to these tensions, unequal rates of individual French-English bilingualism in Quebec and across Canada make the linguistic reality of ESL in the Quebec school system unique both figuratively and in terms of the lived experience of future and current ESL teachers in Quebec.

Historical Contexts and Language Tensions

In the province of Quebec, situated in the officially English/French bilingual country of Canada, we often remark that everything is about language. Quebec itself is officially a unilingual French province, the consequence of a long history of tension, conflict, and coexistence between the languages of the two colonizing countries—England and France[2]. As a result of this history and the political, religious, and ideological struggles that have ensued (Oakes & Warren, 2007), Quebec's ethnic and cultural identity is deeply rooted in language. The use of language as an identity marker aligns with Sachdev and Burris's (2005) notion that where different ethnolinguistic groups coexist in the same geographical and social location, language is not only used as the common (self-)categorization but can also "emerge as the most salient dimension of group identity" (p. 66). In addition, although Canada's Official Languages Act (Canada, 1985) promotes bilingualism and the teaching of French and English as second and additional languages nationwide, in Quebec the passing of Bill 101[3] into law in 1977 resulted in restrictions on who is eligible to attend English language schools. Ostensibly, English schools are reserved under the provisions of Bill 101 for the English-speaking minority population alone. This means that in Quebec, ESL is taught as a compulsory subject exclusively in French schools. Nevertheless, Quebec's continued protectionist stance towards the French language resonates in often negative cultural and social attitudes towards ESL teaching (Fallon & Ruble, 2011), learning, and ESL teachers. This plays out in a number of ways. For example, to be employed in French schools, ESL teachers must pass a French language proficiency test. While logically this makes sense for communication with colleagues, school administration, and parents, it can also indicate a limited acceptance and accommodation for English within the school walls. This contrasts with reports that, at least in Quebec, English school boards do not require FSL teachers to be fluent in English (Masson et al., 2018). The cultural and linguistic contexts of ESL classrooms in French language schools present

2 We recognize that we are on Indigenous lands and that there are Indigenous languages that were spoken long before the colonizers arrived, which continue to be spoken and are being revitalized.

3 Also known as la Charte de la langue française (Quebec, 1977).

an interesting and unique opportunity for researchers seeking to understand why ESL teachers may be especially vulnerable to attrition, as well as understanding ways that teacher identity can be developed and negotiated in these plurilingual contexts.

Language Microcosms

The juxtaposition of unilingual Quebec within officially bilingual Canada has resulted in historically lopsided and unequal bilingualism rates in Canada. Although the 2016 Census (Government of Canada, 2019) reports that bilingualism rates among Anglophones in Quebec are significantly higher (68.8%) than bilingualism rates for Anglophones in the rest of Canada (7.3%), there remains a strong cultural misconception that Quebec Anglophones, and by extension, ESL teachers in Quebec, like Anglophones in the rest of Canada are not likely to be bilingual. The result of these two important factors: the historical resistance towards English in a province that strives to protect the French language, and the historical reality of lower rates of bilingualism for Anglophones in the rest of Canada, means that ESL teachers in Quebec often experience feelings of resistance to their subject (English) as well as unique language-related stressors in the French school milieu.

In addition to the act of teaching ESL in French language schools, in-service and pre-service teachers in ESL teacher education (TESL) programs in Quebec experience a further microcosm of language categorizations. Depending on whether the program is housed in an English or French university (Riches et al., 2016; Steinbach & Kaalgat, 2014), non-native[4] English speakers—mainly Francophones—comprise 40% to almost 100% of students, many of whom were ESL students themselves during their education in the French language schools of Quebec. This fact adds to the complexity of the ESL teacher situation in Quebec, where Francophone ESL teachers can often bypass language tensions in order to gain acceptance into the teaching communities in French-language schools.

Theoretical Frameworks

In order to explore the complex intersections between identity, language teaching, and linguistic landscapes that ESL teachers in Quebec must negotiate, our study draws on identity theory, teacher professional identity theory, linguistic and bilingual identity theory, and critical ethnolinguistic ideologies to explore how ESL teachers understand their own identity—the *self*-identity—and how they are read by the community—the *seen*—identity.

4 See explanation of our use the terms native/non-native and Francophone/Anglophone/allophone below.

Teacher Professional Identity Theory

Most educational researchers (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Gee, 2000; Sachs, 2005; Sadr & Prusak, 2005; Varghese et al., 2005) consider teacher identity to be a fluid construct that is constantly created and recreated depending on context. Identity is also a kind of performance (Sachs, 2005) with teachers becoming a "kind of person" (Gee, 2000, p. 99) in the specific contexts of the classroom or staffroom, for example. A teacher's professional identity can be indistinguishable—or distinct—from the kind of identity they perform as a colleague, parent, spouse, or friend in other contexts (Gee, 2000; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Pre-service teachers, like their more experienced in-service counterparts, also experience these contextual shifts in their professional identity. During their teacher education program, pre-service teachers are in the process of testing and consolidating their values and understanding of what it means to be a teacher, although many are doing so unconsciously (Schaeffer et al., 2021). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) describe this process as the "tension that exists for teachers as they navigate between personal and professional aspects of identity inherent within that of a teacher" (p. 177), with the practicum experience as a site of transformation in teachers' identities. In Thomas and Beauchamp's (2011) study, for example, pre-service teachers moved from a pre-practicum ideal of "teacher-as-nurturer" to a post-practicum understanding of themselves as "teacher-as-survivor" (p. 764). The impetus for survival has particular importance for a pre-service ESL teacher, who is learning to adapt and shift an additional aspect of their self: their linguistic identity when either teaching in their second language or in a second language classroom.

Linguistic and Bilingual Identity Theory

Pre-service teachers learn to *survive* the classroom, in part by learning to negotiate tensions between personal and professional identities once they start teaching (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Norton, 2014; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Second/additional language teachers, however, must negotiate an additional layer of identity, that is, their status as either a *native* or *non-native speaker* (Masson et al., 2018; Varghese et al., 2005). While we recognize that these standard terminologies: *native/non-native English speakers* and *Francophone/Anglophone/allophone* are contentious (e.g., Cook, 1999; Dewald et al., 2018), and arguably reductive (e.g., Crump, 2014), we have decided to use them in this paper as they remain the familiar and salient linguistic categorizations of Quebec inhabitants. Using these terms in our research allowed us to situate and make sense of our participants' own understanding of their linguistic identity (self) and the ways that they were labelled and perceived (seen) in the broader ESL landscape and rhetoric.

Teaching ESL can be "associated to specific social, cultural, and political pressures" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23). One's linguistic identity as a native

or non-native speaker, for example, is deeply embedded in questions of status and hierarchy. The concept of nativespeakerism has long been tied to perceptions of cultural superiority and higher status (Holliday, 2006; Phillipson, 1996). While the connection between higher status and native English speaker-identity is more straightforward in other language teaching contexts (e.g., Alvarez, 2020), the situation in the French language schools in Quebec is more complex. In these contexts, maintaining a Francophone identity is sometimes more important than demonstrating proficiency in the target language—English) (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ), 2021; Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014). Just who determines the linguistic identity of future ESL teachers —native, non-native, Francophone, or other—is another site of tension for language teachers in Quebec.

Identity and Belonging: Affinity-Identity and Discourse-Identity

According to Gee's (2000) theory of identity, teachers' professional identities, like their other identities, are partially constructed through both discourse-identity and affinity-identity experiences. The first experiences, discourse-identity experiences, help the teacher construct their identity through the kinds of things that are said about or to the teacher by members of their teaching community, including students, other teachers, parents, administrators, and even commentary on social media. This kind of identity, read by the community, is what we refer to as the *seen* identity. The second kind of identity-building experiences Gee (2000) discusses, affinity-identity experiences, occur when a teacher feels a sense of belonging to an affinity group (Gee, 2000). Interestingly, affinity-identity experiences, or the feeling of belonging to a community, have also been linked to resilience in teachers (Schaeffer et. al., 2021). The role that a community plays in determining the linguistic identity—the seen identity—of ESL teachers, therefore, makes the experiences of ESL teachers in Quebec a rich site for exploring the intersections between linguistic identity, community acceptance, and resilience.

Critical Ethnolinguistic Theory

Linguistic competence is deeply embedded in how individuals identify within groups and cultures (Gee, 2000; Sachs, 2005). We draw on critical linguistic ideologies to help shed some light on the situations ESL pre- and in-service teachers' face when they are placed in French schools with expectations to form relationships and find acceptance in their teaching community. Ramjattan (2015) remarks that certain teachers lack "the right aesthetic" for ESL teaching regardless of *native* speaker-like language proficiency (p. 693). While the author is referring to Whiteness/non-Whiteness discrimination, we suggest that this concept can be tangentially applied to the situation in Quebec, where non-Francophone ESL teachers who lack access to the Quebecois language and culture, lack *the right aesthetic* for the French

school setting. Preconceived ideas about the intersections between language, identity, and linguistic competence have long historical roots that are beyond the scope of this paper (see Kubota & Lin, 2006). It suffices to say that there is a historical (and continuing) animosity towards English within Francophone Quebec (Oakes & Warren, 2007). When coupled with the current French protectionist stance of Quebec, (e.g., proposed amendments to *La Charte de la langue française* [Quebec, 1977] among other legislation—Bill 96 [National Assembly of Québec, 2021]), historical and political resistance to the English language is a reality.

Alim (2005, 2010) describes critical language awareness as a way to connect language identities and language practices to the larger sociopolitical contexts. In Alim (2010), the author proposes two questions to inform critical language awareness: "'How can language be used to maintain, reinforce, and perpetuate existing power relations?' and, 'How can language be used to resist, redefine, and possibly reverse these relations?'" (p. 214). The goal of critical language awareness is for "students [to] become conscious of their communicative behavior and the ways in which they can transform the conditions under which they live" (2005, p. 28). In our research context, we draw on the concepts inherent in critical language awareness to help us understand how the underlying currents of culture and power influence the ways that ESL teachers' identities and language proficiencies are *seen* by their school communities, and how these *seen* identities, in contrast to the *self*-identity, can influence the teachers' abilities to integrate into their school communities.

Methodology

Research Goals

For this paper and analysis, we draw on previously unpublished data collected during 2018–2020 from two closely related projects with common research participants, designs, and goals. For example, each project investigated how pre-service ESL teachers developed their professional identities as they negotiated and navigated the intersections of language, culture, and identity in the ESL classrooms in French schools in Quebec. In project one, the research questions were: "How do pre-service and in-service ESL teachers negotiate their developing linguistic and professional teacher identities in TESL contexts in Quebec, in terms of (a) language proficiencies and identities and (b) the influence of school contexts and the associated professional and linguistic communities?". In project two, the research question was "How do experiences in the field support or undermine pre-service ESL teachers' growing understanding of themselves as teachers?".

Participants

Participants in both studies were pre-service teachers enrolled in 4-year TESL undergraduate teacher education programs in Quebec, and project one also included in-service ESL teachers. In the first project there were three groups of participants. The first group consisted of first-, second- and fourth-year pre-service teachers enrolled in a TESL program at a large English-language university (Eng-U). The second group of participants were also first-, second- and fourth-year pre-service teachers; however, these participants were enrolled in a TESL program in a French-language university (Fren-U1). The third group of participants consisted of in-service ESL teachers recruited at a professional conference in the fall of 2019.

In the second project there were two groups of participants. The first group was enrolled in the same TESL program in the same English university (Eng-U) as project one; however, these participants were in their third year, rather than their first, second or fourth year. The second group of participants were also TESL students in their third year, but were from a different French-language university, [Fren-U2] than the university in project one. A summary of the participants by data collection method and project are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant Numbers by Project and Data Collection Method

Project 1*	**Online Survey**	**Interviews**	**Focus Groups**	**Total**
English University (Eng-U)	35	10	-	45
French University 1 (Fren-U1)	50	8	-	58
In-service teachers	-	-	13	13
				116
Project 2**				
English University (Eng-U)	-	-	7	7
French University 2 (Fren-U2)	-	-	8	8
				15
Combined Total				**131**

* Participants in this project were all pre-service teachers in their 1st, 2nd, or 4th (final) year of their programs

** Participants in this project were all pre-service teachers in their 3rd year of their program

Methods

In project one, data from participants in the first two groups was collected initially via an online survey designed and administered using LimeSurvey (Version 2.63, 2012). Follow-up interviews were then conducted with a sub-set of these participants who volunteered via the survey [n = 18]. The purpose of these interviews was to gather more detailed information about participants' language background, linguistic identity, and experiences in the

field. The final group of participants—the in-service ESL teachers recruited at a professional conference—were asked to share their experiences as in-service novice language teachers and as teacher mentors to future ESL teachers in a focus group setting.

In project two, the data that we drew on was collected during six focus group sessions— three for each group of participants—over a 4-month period that covered the beginning, midway point, and end of the third-year practicum experience.

In both projects the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were audio recorded using the Voice Recorder application on an iPhone and transcribed into Microsoft Word documents for preliminary hand coding. In project one, these transcripts were then copied into Dedoose (Version 7.0.23, 2016) software, while in project two, the data was transferred into Excel spreadsheets for further coding and analysis.

Analysis

We began thematic analysis of the transcripts from each of the data sources by precoding and noting general patterns and themes during our initial hand coding phase (Saldaña, 2015). At this stage, we gave each of the ideas a broad structural code informed by our survey, interview, and focus group questions, and prompts.

As we moved through the data, coding using an iterative and constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2015), we added new categories and sub-categories to refine our themes and to include more specific information to represent the insights gleaned from our data sources. For example, while the linguistic identity of our participants was initially coded and categorized according to their own self-identification, our analysis resulted in a further classification of the participants according to the way their identity was seen or interpreted by the larger school communities where they were completing their practicums or where they were teaching. It is in discussing the self and seen identities that we made use of the standard or traditional terminologies (native/non-native; Anglophone/Francophone/allophone) mentioned above.

Findings and Discussion

Perceptions of Linguistic Identity

As we sifted through the wealth of data generated from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the first pattern we noticed was that most participants self-identified along linguistic lines so that their understanding of *self* included categories such as *Francophone* (French-speaking) or *Anglophone* (English-speaking). This finding supports Sachdev and Bourhis's

(2005) idea that in the context of Quebec, language is a primary marker of group identity. We also noticed that many participants also reported being identified or *seen* by the school community in line with these same standard terminologies. Finally, we noticed that while most participants identified their *self* as (French-English) bilinguals, a closer analysis of this category revealed a rich diversity in the culture, education, and background of these *bilinguals*. For example, a pre-service teacher from the English university explained, "I am more Anglophone than Francophone, but I am perfectly bilingual," while another pre-service teacher from French-U1 described their linguistic identity this way: "I would say I'm bilingual. But like I said, I have trouble in pronunciation, sometimes in English more than in French. But I have a lot of Anglophone friends … so … I don't know. I'm like in between" (Pre-service teacher, Fren-U1), In the second instance, we see that linguistic identity of the *self* is not just a straightforward matter of competence, it is also linked to a sense of belonging, in this case, to a linguistic group ("Anglophone friends"), which aligns with Gee's (2000) theory of identity—having affinity with a group. This sense of affinity, or *self*-identification with a group based on linguistic identity, has important implications for the ways that ESL teachers are *seen* and are able to integrate into their communities as we will explore further below.

The idea that one can experience difficulties in one language, but still identify oneself as a *bilingual* also supported Steinbach & Kazarloga's (2014) work which found that while pre-service ESL teachers enrolled in a TESL program at a French language university expressed dissatisfaction with their accent in English, they also felt that their proficiency in English was "good enough" (p. 328) to teach in the province. In most English language teaching contexts, the marked preference for English teachers from the Inner Circle countries (Kachru, 1990; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015) equates *a native English speaker* linguistic identity with teaching competence. In the Quebec context, however, more straightforward readings of linguistic competence and identity are subverted by the need to establish or maintain a Quebecois Francophone identity (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014). Any pressure to achieve a *native English speaker* identity through *native-like competence* is replaced in the context of Quebec classrooms with the preference for a *Francophone identity* (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014).

As we dug deeper into how to define and explain the linguistic identities of these ESL teachers, a new pattern emerged: looking at the ways ESL teachers navigated their school communities, it appeared that it was not the self-identified linguistic identity of the teacher—the self—that influenced how well they integrated into the school community, but rather how the teacher's linguistic identity was seen by the community itself, in other words, the ESL teacher's "Discourse identity experiences" (Gee, 2000, p. 99). In order to explore this interesting interplay between the self and the seen identity, we began to classify the ESL teachers' identities based on the

seen identity. These categories were drawn from what the participants told us about their experiences in schools, and about how they believed their linguistic identities were interpreted by those around them. When we shifted our categorization of the ESL teachers from self to seen identity, we found three broad categories: (a) self-identified bilinguals—seen by the school community as bilingual-Francophones; (b) self-identified bilinguals—seen by the community as Anglophone; and (c) immigrants to Canada who spoke multiple languages, including highly proficient French, self-identifying as bilingual or plurilingual, but seen by their community as allophones, i.e., not Francophone or Anglophone, and definitely not Quebecois. In what follows, we will define each category, providing contextualized examples of how these identities were seen by the school community. We will then explore how these seen linguistic identities influenced how the ESL teachers integrated into their school communities (affinity-identity experiences), which in turn, influenced their feelings of belonging and acceptance into the community.

Bilingual Francophones

The first category of linguistic identity that we identified were bilingual teachers who were seen by the community as bilingual Francophones. These teachers were usually enrolled in TESL programs in French universities, and sometimes even in other specialties in their teacher education degrees. For example, in our focus groups two in-service teachers were not only graduates of a French language institution, but they were also qualified as French teachers: "I wasn't trained as an English teacher … [I was trained as] a French high school teacher, but I've been teaching it [ESL] for six years" (In-service teacher). Being identified as a bilingual-Francophone by one's teaching community has distinct advantages (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014), as many novice and pre-service teachers in our study realized and emphasized in their own decision to self-identify as Francophone: "As a Francophone, I find it's way easier for me to relate to my students, because I can speak to them in French, create the link, build on that, and then switch this to the English afterwards" (In-service teacher). Several of our participants spoke of the mistrust that their classroom students initially exhibited towards them as ESL teachers, and how they used French with these students as a strategy to address their students' discomfort: "a lot of them [students] [feel] uncomfortable to approach you in English. I don't want them to have like that distance … I can speak with them in French and that seems to open them up" (Pre-service teacher, Eng-U). ESL teachers in our study used French with their students to facilitate communication, but also, strategically, to reassure their students that they shared a common culture and identity: "They [the students] kind of understand, okay yes you teach English, but you're still a French speaker, you have the shared experience, you are in Quebec, you live in this town like we do. It kind of helps create a bridge between you

and the students where you have shared experience outside of just your language" (Pre-service teacher, Fren-U1). For the pre-service ESL teacher in the above example, French language serves as a conduit to transmit important messages about identity and affinity, creating recognition on the part of the students that they share a common culture ("experience outside of just your language") with their teacher.

Bilingual Anglophones

The second category we identified were bilinguals with strong French language skills who had gravitated towards English language and culture either through social interactions or education, or both:

> French [is] the first language I did learn when I was young, but when I started going to school … I was in an English environment in an English school and all my friends were really in like English—like barely speaking French so, I just didn't practice as much because my family is really like bilingual *Anglophone.* (Pre-service teacher, Eng-U)

Being an ESL teacher sometimes also means being assigned an Anglophone and *outsider* identity by default:

> The way that other teachers view ESL teachers … I could see that they were not really happy with us being there … there's this, you know, awkwardness when teachers meet ESL teachers and they don't know how to react, what language to speak … We feel like we're *other than.* (Pre-service teacher, Eng-U)

Sometimes this *seen* identity occurred despite the strength of the pre-service teacher's French language skills or their own individual linguistic identity. For example, in the following case a pre-service teacher who strongly *self*-identified as a *Francophone* was still *seen* by their school community as an *Anglophone*:

> It was a really strange feeling, because I'm Francophone, so I just wanted to scream, "No, I'm part of you guys, I'm actually Francophone!" … But, you know, they still saw me as an *Anglophone*, even though I'm not at all, so it was—it kind of made me realize that maybe people would see me as a different person, or different identity. They wouldn't look at me and think, "She's Quebecoise" They'd be like, "oh, she's one of those English people, Anglophone people." … I've noticed that for the first time in my life, people would look at me differently, and not look at me as the person that I am, but rather the English or Anglophone person that I am. So, that was definitely strange, *to feel no longer like myself*, in a way. You know, *I have my cultural identity, which is Quebec and French language and to have people look at me like an Anglophone* and to have this weird—you know it was just a very odd experience. (Pre-service teacher, Eng-U [emphasis added])

The context in which the pre-service teacher experienced this moment of mistaken identity was during their first practicum, when a cohort of first year students from the same program at the English university spent 3 weeks observing the classrooms and culture of the school. It appears that by default, these pre-service ESL teachers were *seen* as a group by their community as *Anglophones*. The participant's feelings of schism and "otherness" in having their identity misread supports, in part, the idea that for an ESL teacher, being identified as an Anglophone is distinctly disadvantageous in the linguistic contexts in which they teach.

In order to integrate into the social culture of the school, it is clear that something more than highly proficient French skills is required. For successful integration, ESL teachers need to demonstrate fluency in the cultural codes and norms of specific *kinds* of communication. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the ability to produce *small talk*:

> Small talk has to be done in French. it becomes hard—for people that are Anglophone and didn't really learn French, [they need to] learn how to make small talk, how to make friends and make, whatever, in French … And, and we don't have very tolerant teachers … if they know we don't speak French … we're put aside and then it really puts [sic] an awful work environment for everywhere (Pre-service teacher, Eng-U).

This quote exemplifies the situation we alluded to when describing bilingualism rates in Canada: there is an expectation in French language schools that ESL teachers are Anglophones and that Anglophones do not speak French. While a lack of French proficiency in a French school setting can certainly lead to barriers in communication with other teachers and with parents, it is often an *expected or perceived* lack of proficiency on the part of the school community—rather than the ESL teacher's actual ability to communicate in French—that determines acceptance into the community. The participant above explains that one of the ways ESL teachers can overcome this assumption—and the risks of isolation and a toxic work environment associated with it—is by demonstrating cultural and linguistic affinity (affinity identity) with the other staff members through performance of *small talk*.

On the other hand, in certain contexts an Anglophone identity can sometimes be seen as an advantage. Several of our participants noticed that in the context of French private schools, for example, their surnames functioned as important signifiers of identity and even competence as this in-service teacher explained:

> When I was teaching in a private school, English was a priority … When they saw your name—it was an Anglo name—it just—whether you could teach or not at that point, didn't matter. You had an Anglo name! OK, we are in, right? (In-service teacher)

Examples like these indicate that not only is the linguistic identity of the ESL teacher being seen by members of the community through indicators such as names, but the *status* is also being assigned according to perceptions of linguistic identity. Again, these linguistic identities as they are *seen* by the teaching community are further complicated by the educational contexts of private versus public schools. Acceptance by the community is sometimes subject to the same preference for *native* English speakers over *non-native* English speakers that is found in language teaching contexts outside of Quebec (Kiczkowiak, 2020).

In all of these examples, how the ESL teachers defined their own linguistic identity was less important to their integration into their professional communities than the way their identity was seen by the communities themselves. What was also apparent is that professional communities use markers of linguistic identity, such as linguistic proficiency, cultural competency (e.g., "small talk"), and surnames to help them determine the ESL teacher's identity. The pre-service and in-service bilingual Francophone and bilingual Anglophone ESL teachers in our study seem to intuitively understand the advantages conferred on certain types of identity over others (see Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014) in certain contexts. We now turn our attention to the more complicated discourse experiences of linguistic identity that exist for the third group of ESL teachers that we identified: plurilingual allophones.

Plurilingual Allophones

The third discourse-identity linguistic category of teachers from our study were those who had immigrated to Canada from another country and spoke at least one, if not several, languages in addition to English and French. In Quebec, and in some contexts in the rest of Canada, people whose first language(s) are other than French or English are commonly referred to as *allophones.* These multilingual ESL teachers were seen by their teaching communities as neither Anglophone nor Francophone, even if they were highly proficient in French.

> I've had my teaching experience in my country, but—so neither French nor English is my first language, so finding myself in the French school teaching English—you can imagine how challenging … I speak five languages, and English and French is my third and fourth. (In-service teacher)

Plurilingual allophones are also subjected to the conventional preference for *native* English speakers over *non-native* English speakers found in other language teaching contexts (e.g., Kiczkowiak, 2020). While in many Quebec schools, there is a marked preference for ESL teachers with a *Francophone* identity, the experience does not hold for ESL teachers who self-identify as Francophone, but are seen as *allophone:*

> I'm a Francophone, but I have an accent when I speak French. And even talking to students in French, it's very hard at first. … The first year, I remember my first years, students were joking because I did not understand all the Quebecois expressions, so it took me some time, just responding to that—and I am a French speaker! (In-service teacher)

This quote exemplifies the importance of performing the "right kind" of linguistic identity through the "aesthetic" (Ramjattan, 2015, p. 693) of a specifically Quebecois accent and access to *Quebecois expressions*.

While the right kind of accent in French can help an ESL teacher to be seen as Francophone, an accent in English, on the other hand, can also mark some ESL teachers as *allophone* and *other* by other ESL teachers within their teaching communities in secondary schools:

> [My cooperating teacher] realized I'm a non-native speaker [of English] … She told me, "You know, [the university] is very concerned about you, and how you will pass this internship. They're very concerned." And I said, "Why? Who is concerned? I have the best grades. I'm doing well. Who is concerned? … I have just A's. Everybody says I'm—I'm good. Why is [she] concerned?" "Oh, it's about your accent." So now I understood, they are really concerned about all the immigrants in our group. (Pre-service teacher, Fren-U2)

Allophones appear to be subject to a double bias: they do not have the right *aesthetic* to be accepted as a *bilingual Francophone* by other Francophones, nor do they have the right accent to be seen as *Anglophones* by other Anglophone ESL teachers.

Accent wasn't the only issue. Like their Anglophone counterparts, names also functioned as a signifier of linguistic identity for the *allophone* participants. Many *allophone* participants in our study felt that having a *foreign* name was not advantageous and was instead seen by the community as a signifier of their outsider status—and less trusted—identity: "I feel sometimes not trusted because I have a foreign name" (In-service teacher).

In addition to struggling with speaking with the *right kind* of accent in French or English, these ESL teachers also report feeling confronted by a milieu that relies on physical characteristics to *see* them as a racialized *other.*

> I feel like I was intimidated. Look at me, I'm Asian. If you think you guys feel like, isolated in French school, teaching English, what about me? I'm Asian, people will give even more push. Like, "You don't even have a Caucasian face, *so what language—what do you represent*?" (Pre-service teacher, [emphasis added]).

Like the Anglophones in our research, the allophones felt that their school communities had identified them as outsiders. Their seen linguistic identities in these communities were not solely based in the subject matter they taught

(ESL) but were also the result of the cultural and racial markers, such as accent, name, and physical appearance that their school communities used to interpret their identities.

Historical and Cultural Responses to English

Being *seen* as a *bilingual Francophone* appears to be advantageous for ESL teachers in Quebec schools, not just for questions of status (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014) but also as a strategy for navigating the political currents of the French language schools, which is why the first rule an ESL teacher learns upon entering a French school for the first time is "*Ici on parle français*." "It was pretty clear that any other language was not tolerated" (Pre-service teacher Eng-U). In fact, many of our participants spoke of the negative attitudes towards the English language that are pervasive in French Quebecois culture, and they explicitly linked these attitudes to historical trauma: "When you are teaching ESL, you need a comprehension of the attitudes you will be facing … It's cultural, and it's trauma" (In-service teacher). "There are many who connect the history between the Francophones and the Anglophones two hundred years ago, … until today, the Quebecers hate English" (Pre-service teacher Fren-U1).

ESL in Quebec involves language crossings and intersections which shift depending not only on the linguistic background of the teacher but also on the contexts they find themselves in. These contexts are more than linguistic and political; they are also cultural. It is not always enough to demonstrate proficiency in French, you must speak it with the right accent and demonstrate cultural proficiency. For allophones, it is also not enough to speak English proficiently, they must speak with the right accent that will identify them as an insider with the outsiders (Anglophones), as discussed in the section Plurilingual Allophones. While all ESL teachers face challenges having their language and identity accepted in the various spaces of the Quebec school system, our research shows that for some, acceptance comes more easily than for others.

Implications and Conclusions

We began this paper by explaining that in Quebec *everything is about language*. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Quebec government tabled a bill to update *La Charte de la langue française* (Quebec, 1977) and strengthen the status of French in Quebec (CBC/Radio Canada, 2021). This moment captures the reality of ESL teacher and ESL teaching and learning in this French province. We advocate adopting a critical ethnolinguistic stance to understand and support the position and opportunity for ESL teachers in this context. A critical first step is to recognize that

> language is never neutral, never simply a "means of communication" … language use is always loaded with issues of power, hierarchy, and dominance, as well as contestation, resistance, and transformation … unexpected connections cannot be fully understood without considering multiple layers of context, such as the immediate sociolinguistic context, the broader sociopolitical context, and the historical context, all in terms of relations to power. (Alim, 2010, pp 207–8)

For ESL teachers to be accepted and be part of the French school system in Quebec, they need to be able to enter into, engage in, and acquire the culture and power of that system (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Our research suggests that those who are seen as Francophone are accepted; for others, this is not a given. The first step in helping ESL teachers who are not already participants in the "codes of power" (Flores & Rosa, 2015 p. 164) in the French language schools in Quebec where they teach, is to make the rules of the culture explicit so they can acquire power more easily. We propose that to begin this process we must first recognize the distinct language practices and expectations associated with ESL teaching in Quebec French schools. In our research we have identified four; each of which is outlined and discussed below.

1. Historical, cultural, and political influences are active in the Quebec French school system.

These influences result in a marked preference not only for teachers with French language proficiency, but also for those with a specific (Quebecois) Francophone identity. This preference is very clear, even unconsciously from other ESL teachers, as in this example: "I believe as a teacher of a second language, students should come out of university with a very solid background with a certain easiness with the target language [English] and with their mother tongue[5] as well" (In-service teacher). These findings also explain why in Steinbach and Kazarloga's (2014) study, participants were unwilling to discard their *Francophone* identity, given the access to community membership that such a linguistic identity affords them.

2. ESL teachers have an especially difficult task when establishing their professional identities within these linguistic and political landscapes.

The second contextual factor that ESL teachers work within is that, unlike FSL teachers in the rest of Canada and teachers of other subjects, ESL teachers have additional layers of identity that they must negotiate and integrate

[5] Note that the assumption of this participant is that the "mother tongue" is French.

within their professional selves. As one of our in-service teacher participants put it:

> As an ESL teacher you're an ambassador of the second language in your school. It has a lot to do with what you said, what you referred to as "professional identity" Who are you in the school? Are you a French-speaking person? Are you a Francophone? An Anglophone? What language are you going to use in front of others who maybe don't know the language you're speaking?" (In-service teacher)

3. ESL teachers, especially those from English language institutions. are likely to be seen as Anglophones.

The third issue for ESL teachers is that despite how they might identify linguistically and culturally, they are often seen as Anglophone by default because of their subject matter choice. The phenomenon of equating the subject matter taught with a presumed linguistic identity (ESL = Anglophone) was especially strong for ESL teachers enrolled in programs at English universities. Furthermore, there is an assumption that Anglophones don't speak French when in fact a large percentage of students in TESL programs in English universities identify as Francophone and others are generally proficient in French. However, proficiency in French is only a partial solution to being accepted into French school communities. What is needed is access and acceptance into the Francophone Quebecois inner circle (Kachru, 1990), or better yet, an expansion of that circle to include other kinds of speakers and proficiencies.

4. Multilingual immigrants (even those identifying as Francophones) and especially teachers from racialized groups face challenges in addition to those faced by Anglophones.

Finally, it is vital to recognize that some ESL teachers who are racialized and/or from ethnic minorities are identified by their communities as allophone, and this identity comes with additional challenges in integration compared to those faced by Anglophones. In the language and politically charged province of Quebec and French school system, the possibilities of a broader multilingual perspective need to be recognized and supported.

Conclusion

Our research indicates that in the context of teaching ESL in Quebec, it is often the perceived linguistic identity of ESL teachers that appears to be essential to their success in integrating into teaching communities and being seen as a "certain kind of person" (Gee, 2000, p. 99). This may contribute to contextual stressors leading to attrition for ESL teachers that are not necessarily present for teachers of other subjects. We agree with Alim (2010) and Pennycook

(2001) that language teaching and learning is "always already political and, moreover, an instrument and a resource for change, for challenging and changing the wor(l)d" (Green, 1997 in Pennycook, 2001, p. 157). Choosing to embrace a multilingual future for Quebec over the official unilingual French identity is a highly contentious political choice. So is teaching ESL in Quebec. And yet while there is still a demand for ESL classes in Quebec, understanding the "codes of power" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 164) that are in place in French-language schools is an important first step in supporting the ESL teachers—whatever their linguistic identity—who navigate and teach in these realities.

The Authors

Caroline Riches is an associate professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, McGill University. Her current research is focused on pre-service language teacher professional identity, teacher education program design and efficacy, and sociolinguistics applied to second/additional language education.

Philippa Parks is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the Université de Sherbrooke, Quebec. Her research looks at how future language teachers form their professional identity during teacher education, particularly how they build self-efficacy and resilience during teacher education and the practicum experience.

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