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Communication In Crisis: Foreign Language Learning on the Decline in a Globalising World
by

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Abstract

FLL is essential for preparing students for an interconnected world, yet its promotion faces challenges, some rooted in sociohistorical occurrences. This project examines the complex role of school leaders (SLs) and policymakers in promoting foreign language learning (FLL) within educational institutions. It also highlights the key role SLs play in addressing the challenges faced by foreign language teachers, including a lack of institutional support and the emotional toll this takes on their practice. It emphasizes the need for SLs to create supportive environments that foster FLL and meet the professional and emotional needs of said teachers. Motivational factors in FLL are explored, asserting that successful second language acquisition is driven by personal motivation and autonomy, not obligation. The study critiques policies that attempt to force FLL, advocating instead for environments where students connect language learning to their personal aspirations. Additionally, the project explores the sociohistorical context of FLL, particularly in Canada, where historical tensions between anglophone and francophone communities continue to shape language policies, underscoring the long-lasting effects of such policies. Recent legislative efforts, like Quebec's Bill 96, illustrate their potential to hinder FLL. The aim of this project is to explore the attitudes of key stakeholders, particularly SLs and policymakers, toward FLL and to propose insights into how language policies can be reformed to create more inclusive and motivating FLL environments. Ultimately, it contributes to the discourse on global language education, advocating for policies that respect linguistic diversity and align with contemporary educational needs.

Keywords: foreign language learning, school leadership, sociolinguistic landscape, sociohistorical impact of language learning, educational policy, Quebec's bill 96, globalization, linguistic diversity, attitudes to foreign language learning

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
The Role of School Leaders in Promoting FLL.....	5
Motivational Factors in Foreign Language Acquisition.....	6
The Sociohistorical Context of Foreign Language Learning in Canada.....	7
Leadership: What is it?	10
Leadership in Schools	10
Foreign Language Learning in the Anglophone World.....	11
A Glimpse at School Leaders Attitudes to Foreign Language Learning.....	12
The Importance of Foreign Language Learning in a Globalised World.....	13
A Foreign Language Teacher's Burden.....	15
What Should School Leaders Do?.....	16
Question: Why Should FLL Be Promoted in Academic Institutions?.....	17
The Reality of Second Language Acquisition.....	17
Encouraging Rather than Forcing: Examining an Example in	
Context.....	18
History of the French Language in Canada.....	19
Acknowledging the Colonial Past.....	21
An Amusing Turn of Events.....	22
What Can School Leaders and Policy Makers Do?.....	24
References.....	28

Introduction

Foreign language learning (FLL) is an essential aspect of modern education, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world. In academic institutions, the promotion of FLL should not be viewed merely as an academic obligation, but as a critical component of preparing students for a globalised world. However, despite its importance, the promotion of FLL in schools is often hindered by various challenges, including sociohistorical issues, inadequate support, and negative perceptions of FLL. School leaders (SLs) and policymakers play crucial roles in shaping the educational environment and fostering an atmosphere where foreign language acquisition is valued and encouraged. By way of literature synthesis, this project will discuss the importance of FLL in general, with a focus on the role of school leaders and the motivational factors behind foreign language acquisition. By way of example, the sociohistorical context of language learning in Canada, where linguistic policies have been deeply influenced by historical conflicts between French and English speakers.

The Role of School Leaders in Promoting FLL

The role of school leaders in promoting FLL is undeniably significant. SLs are responsible for creating an educational environment that supports the teaching and learning of foreign languages, ensuring that students are not only encouraged but also equipped to engage in language acquisition. However, many foreign language educators, work in settings where resources are limited, time for language instruction is insufficient, and support is often minimal. This reality, as highlighted in the research of Fielding (2022) and García (2010), presents challenges in effectively implementing FLL programs. Teachers may find themselves working in environments where they lack the necessary institutional backing to foster effective language instruction, leading to frustration and burnout.

Moreover, the attitude of SLs toward FLL significantly impacts how teachers approach their work. The affective tone set by SLs – whether supportive or indifferent – directly influences teachers’ motivation and effectiveness. As Slišković et al. (2019) suggest, the emotional climate of a school plays a critical role in how both educators and students perceive and engage with learning. In the case of FLL, school leaders must recognize the unique challenges faced by foreign language teachers and provide adequate emotional and professional support. This support can take many forms, from providing time for professional development to creating a more positive environment where FLL is valued by the whole school community. By fostering a school climate that encourages linguistic diversity and supports FLL teachers, SLs can help mitigate the emotional and social challenges that arise from teaching foreign languages in an environment where such learning may not always be prioritised. It is, therefore, essential that SLs not only advocate for the importance of FLL, but also provide tangible support to ensure that students are given the opportunity to engage with languages in a meaningful way.

Motivational Factors in Foreign Language Acquisition

The success of any FLL initiative hinges on the motivation of the learners themselves. As noted by Macnamara and Edwards (1973), intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in the acquisition of a foreign language. Without a personal connection to language learning, students are less likely to engage meaningfully with the process. Oakes (2013) expands on this notion by identifying several key motivators which include the desire to travel, the pursuit of cultural pride, and the potential for reciprocal communication with others. For foreign language acquisition to be effective, students must perceive the language learning process as valuable and personally relevant. Macfarlane (2023) argues that policies which force students to learn a language, rather than inspiring them to see the benefits of acquiring a new language, can lead to resistance and

disengagement. Policies like Bill 96, which seek to mandate language learning in restrictive ways, fail to address the intrinsic factors that motivate students. Pradeau (2016) further underscores the importance of autonomy in language learning, suggesting that when students feel empowered to choose to learn a language rather than being compelled to do so, their motivation and success are enhanced. Therefore, it is essential for policymakers and school leaders to create an environment that highlights the personal value and enjoyment that can come from learning a foreign language, fostering an atmosphere where students see the language as a tool for personal and global growth.

The Sociohistorical Context of Foreign Language Learning in Canada

The sociohistorical context of FLL in Canada plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's language policies, particularly those surrounding the relationship between French and English. From the colonial period onward, the linguistic dynamic in Canada has been shaped by struggles for power and control between these two language groups. The French-speaking population, faced the imposition of English as the dominant language in governmental, legal, and educational institutions following the British acquisition of Canada in 1763. The marginalisation of the French language led to a series of legislative measures aimed at protecting and promoting French, including Bill 22 (1974) and Bill 101 (1977), which sought to solidify the status of French within Quebec's government, businesses, and schools.

Despite these protective measures, tensions between the anglophone and francophone communities have persisted, culminating in the institution of Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. This provision guaranteed educational rights to linguistic minorities, ensuring access to education in their native language. However, as the recent passage of Bill 96 in Quebec demonstrates, the struggle to preserve the French language remains

ongoing. Bill 96 aims to make French the exclusive language in governmental, educational, and business settings, reinforcing the province's commitment to linguistic protection. However, this approach raises questions about the inclusion of other language groups and the potential impact on FLL in Quebec.

The historical conflict between French and English speakers in Canada, as discussed by Molinari (2008), has laid the groundwork for modern debates over language policies. While promoting the French language is crucial for preserving Quebec's cultural identity, policies that enforce linguistic exclusivity, such as those found in Bill 96, may undermine the broader goal of fostering bilingualism and may alienate communities that wish to learn languages other than French. These sociohistorical dynamics underscore the importance of developing inclusive language policies that promote linguistic diversity and coexistence.

Thus, the promotion of FLL in educational institutions is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including the role of school leaders, the motivations of students, and the sociohistorical context in which language policies are developed. School leaders have a critical role to play in creating an environment that supports FLL, fostering positive emotional climates, and providing the necessary resources and support for teachers. Motivational factors also play a central role in the success of language acquisition, as students are more likely to succeed when they see the personal value in learning a foreign language. Finally, the sociohistorical context of Canada, shaped by colonialism and ongoing tensions between French and English speakers, has had a lasting impact on language policies that continue to shape the educational landscape today.

The aim of this project is to explore the attitudes of key stakeholders – primarily school leaders and policymakers – toward the promotion of FLL. Likewise, it will highlight the challenges and opportunities in advancing foreign language education, particularly in contexts

shaped by historical and sociopolitical factors. It is crucial that SLs and policymakers alike reflect on their roles in fostering an environment that not only encourages FLL but also recognises and respects the diverse motivations and backgrounds of students. By considering these various factors and addressing them in a holistic manner, policymakers and SLs can create an educational environment that fosters effective and inclusive FLL, ultimately preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of a globalised world.

As a speaker and teacher of several languages, the contents of this project are of utmost importance to me as it sheds light on an ongoing issue which is continually swept under the rug by the powers that be – our leaders. I am calling on these leaders (SLs in particular) to honour their appointment as pedagogical leaders (Government of Alberta, 2023) within their institutions, by according all subject matters appropriate respect.

Leadership: What Is It?

Leadership – a term that has as many definitions as it does models to follow and implement. In reality though, the concept is not so complex and simply requires an individual to be a visionary, with sharp, all-encompassing analytical skills and a good understanding of the field in which that individual works. In so doing, that individual would be more equipped to guide the personnel in question toward specified objectives. Northouse (2022) proposes a relatively simple, yet apt, definition of leadership – “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (para.2). Essentially, a leader is expected to assign each member of staff a task or role which will better aid the organisation in the achievement of its common goal.

Leadership in Schools

Similarly, a leader of an academic institution is expected to incite teaching personnel, and others, to put their best effort towards the education of the student body. That is, an SL is tasked with ensuring that each teacher – each member of staff – work effectively to achieve the common goal of prioritising positive student outcomes. What is involved in this process? An SL must envision what an ideal student looks like at the end of his or her school career. In order to do that, a leader must remain updated on the current state of local, regional, national and international affairs. That is, an SL should keep abreast of the ever-changing scenery of the world. That being said, nowadays, globalisation is becoming increasingly evident and the sociocultural and sociolinguistic landscape of many countries have changed and continue to change. Gone are the days when many nations were quite homogenous (García, 2010).

Therefore, in today's world, SLs who promotes FLL at their institutions can be described as true visionaries because they note and understand that being monolingual is not representative of the citizens of tomorrow, who will live amongst even more societal melange (Advisory Council for Learning and Teaching in Scotland, 2002, as cited in Tisdall, 2013; Harju & Niemi, 2008; Sinnema & Aitken, 2013; DfE, 2015, as mentioned in Gruber & Hopwood, 2022). As noted by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2020), the education which students receive today ought to ensure that, upon exiting school, they are suitably equipped to live in the real world. In this report, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation is zoning in on the importance of including digital technologies in the teaching and learning environment, given the current digital landscape of the world which is seeing an increase in integration of technological tools in all aspects of life. Of course, students can learn without using digital tools. Nonetheless, in so doing, they will not be aptly prepared for the realities of daily life in this day in age. Similarly, in line with this

reasoning and the change in the sociolinguistic makeup of the world, the need to boost FLL is evident.

Foreign Language Learning in the Anglophone World

The call for a boost in studies in FLL within educational institutions is perhaps most dire in the English-speaking world where, according to Batram (2010), FLL has remained rather low. It is arguable that this issue is further compounded by the promotion of English as the worldwide lingua franca by various sectors (Duarte, 2022; Mayumi & Zheng, 2023) which leads many native anglophones to conclude that knowing English is good and plenty for survival (Oakes, 2013). Though there may be some truth to the line of thought (since English is undeniably widespread), such a viewpoint in itself is rather paradoxical. How so? According to (Eberhard et al., 2025), there are approximately 1.3 billion persons who speak English, however, as Crystal (2013) notes, “the ratio of native to non-native is around in 1:3” (p. 69). Therefore, as per the statistics, native English speakers represent approximately a mere five percent of the world’s population. As such, to sustain the aforementioned expectation of English speakers, the vast majority of individuals on earth would have to dedicate themselves to learning a foreign language (aka FLL) – in their case, English. It is easily distinguishable that such an expectation is absurd.

In a similar vein, leaders of non-English language institutions must be careful not to promote English as the only foreign language to be learnt or acquired (García, 2010). As referenced in Duarte (2022), Lin and Martin (2005) also contend that the widespread status of English as a lingua franca encourages individuals to abandon their native languages in favour of English, seeking socioeconomic benefits—specifically prestige and higher income. Thus, according to Lin and Martin (2005), English can be likened to a package filled with attractive

rewards. For this reason, though, SLs of non-English language institutions must be particularly careful not to hammer home this rhetoric nor to succumb to English cultural assimilation (Oakes, 2013).

A Glimpse at School Leaders Attitudes to Foreign Language Learning

Unfortunately, though, from personal experience and in observation, most persons occupying formal leadership positions in schools – and even informal leaders (or those with strong influence over the staff or student body) – carry lacklustre attitudes in relation to FLL. In examining the literature, there appears to be a void in connection with SLs’ attitudes toward FLL among English-speaking students, particularly at the secondary level where the introduction of another language tends to be most common. However, studies on bilingualism, specifically in contexts where English is the second language, offer valuable insights into the topic. For instance, research by Menken and Solorza (2013) illustrates the indifferent stance some SLs take toward bilingual education, with many opting to eliminate their programs in favour of an English-only model or, in some cases, complying with policy changes to receive better performance reviews. Some SLs from the study even went so far as to accuse foreign students of being uncommitted to their new country, in contrast to their own (SLs’) “ancestors” (Menken & Solorza, 2013, p. 19) (Europeans) who immigrated over a century ago, thus revealing underlying prejudices. This information reveals that certain SLs, even if it were within their power to promote FLL at their institutions, would refuse to do so. In this case specifically, it can be argued that by SLs assigning superior worth to their native language, their appreciation for FLL and the value it can add to a student’s school exit profile is significantly blurred.

That fact is that the inclination to have a “linguistically homogeneous population” (Menken & Solorza, 2013, p. 21) is concerning, particularly in a world where student

populations are becoming increasingly diverse (Harju & Niemi, 2008). In fact, García (2009) challenges monolingual education, an idea echoed by some SLs in Menken and Solorza's (2013) study, with one SL even asserting that the only way to effectively educate all students in the twenty-first century is by raising them as bilinguals. While this may be seen as an extreme position, given that mastery of a language takes "a great deal of effort" (Crystal, 2012, p. 3), the argument for encouraging students to dedicate some time to learn a language other than their native tongue – whether they achieve fluency or not – remains a compelling one.

The Importance of Foreign Language Learning in a Globalised World

The value of FLL is dwarfed by its continuous struggle against the pervasive "English is enough mentality" (Oakes, 2013, p. 179). The promotion of English as "the worldwide lingua franca" (Duarte, 2022, p. 367) by academia, the media, and the business world has a stronger influence than ever before (Mayumi & Zheng, 2023). It is particularly concerning in English-speaking countries, where interest in other languages has traditionally been low (Batram, 2010). In light of this, García (2010) warns against surrendering "all the educational spaces to the types of English-only" (p. 30). Essentially, it is important to remember that the purpose of education is not solely to impart knowledge and prepare students for employment, but also to offer opportunities for personal development and moral growth (Deng, 2015), with language playing a crucial role in this process (Darvin & Norton, 2015) by exposing students to diverse ways of life.

In addition to enabling practical communication (DfE, 2013, as mentioned in Gruber & Hopwood, 2022), FLL opens up opportunities for students to expand their worldviews and move beyond familiar cultural limits (DfE, 2015, as mentioned in Gruber & Hopwood, 2022). Furthermore, it fosters linguistic awareness and tolerance, preparing students to interact effectively in multilingual contexts (García, 2010). As the Advisory Council for Learning and

Teaching in Scotland (2002, as cited in Tisdall, 2013) notes, students are the citizens of tomorrow. Therefore, education must prioritise “the needs of learners in the twenty-first century” (Sinnema & Aitken, 2013, p. 114) rather than those of past generations. Given the sociolinguistic diversity of the modern world, this research is suggesting that FLL should be thoroughly integrated into contemporary education.

A substantial body of research indicates that proficiency in more than one language enhances English literacy (Bialystok, 2018; García, 2009; Genesee, 2015 as cited in Fielding, 2022). However, as Fielding (2022) points out, the educational benefits of FLL are often overshadowed by its economic potential, which is frequently tied to political motivations. This is clearly illustrated in an analysis of German curricula by Gruber and Hopwood (2022), where economic growth and the preservation of the Franco-German relationship are presented as key objectives. Hence, this suggests that nations are more likely to implement policies that favour languages believed to offer economic benefits or political leverage (Crystal, 2012). Such policies, however, do not represent a genuine promotion of FLL.

While some countries recognise FLL as an economic asset, others seem to disregard it, effectively ignoring language-related issues (Coleman, 2009). For example, the British Council (2013) reported that the levels of FLL in Britain were insufficient to meet the country’s economic demands; in the United States, FLL was considered to be in a state of crisis (AAAS, 2016 as cited in Fielding, 2022), yet policymakers have failed to introduce measures to support FLL (Fielding, 2022). This silence, in turn, fosters negative public attitudes toward FLL (Busse & Williams, 2010), with many perceiving it as overly difficult (Gruber & Hopwood, 2022), if not a waste of time. As a consequence, young people fail to recognise its true value and relevance in both their education and daily lives, leaving teachers to bear the brunt of this disconnect.

A Foreign Language Teacher's Burden

Teachers bear the significant challenge of working within an environment governed by rigid policies and curricular frameworks that influence the value placed on FLL (Fielding, 2022; García, 2010). Often, teachers are not provided with sufficient time for FLL, dedicated spaces nor adequate support from senior colleagues (Fielding, 2022). This is further exacerbated by a lack of support from key stakeholders, such as parents, who frequently offer harsh criticism of teachers and their methods (Berkovich & Eyal, 2020). In so doing, the desire to be within the foreign language teaching and learning environment wanes, leading many educators to take daily steps to mitigate the resultant negative emotions (Sutton & Harper, 2009). Nonetheless, it should be noted that in the case where English is the foreign language being offered, the resistance may not be as strong considering that many students are inclined to learn it for socioeconomic gain (Oakes, 2013). However, when the situation is flipped where English is the mother tongue and other languages are being taught, the opposition and defiance is much more rampant given the present status of English in the world (Crystal, 2012; Duarte, 2022; Mayumi & Zheng, 2023). Consequently, as mentioned before, that “English is enough mentality”, as discussed in Oakes (2013) on page 179, really takes a toll on the foreign language teaching and learning environment, and by extension the affective disposition of foreign language teachers. This I know from personal experience and observation.

What Should School Leaders Do?

In such a demanding profession, where teachers' responsibilities are continually expanding (Toom & Husu, 2018), social support becomes essential to enhance the emotional climate within the workplace (Dunseath et al., 1995; Ju et al., 2015). This support should include opportunities for teachers to engage in open discussions with school leaders (Antonakis et al.,

2003; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003 as cited in Goddard et al., 2010). There is a wealth of research highlighting the importance of leaders providing support to their followers. Therefore, SLs must make a concerted effort to ensure that teachers feel adequately supported in their roles.

Essentially, SLs are entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding human capital (Schroedler, 2018) by ensuring their schools operate efficiently (Harju & Niemi, 2018). According to Goddard et al. (2010), these leaders have a significant impact – whether positive or negative – on the instructional norms within their schools, which undoubtedly affect student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). Thus, following the reasoning put forth by Bossert et al. (1982) and Heck et al. (1990), for improvements in FLL to occur, SLs must establish schoolwide conditions that actively support FLL. Additionally, they need to provide the social support necessary to alleviate the negative emotions teachers often experience (Song, 2008; Berkovich & Eyal, 2020), as teaching is inherently an affective practice (James, 2012). Fundamentally, the interaction between leaders and teachers plays a pivotal role in setting the “emotional tone” (Slišković et al., 2019, p. 206) of the school. This tone, in turn, influences how both teachers and students approach their classes; in this case specifically, within the FLL environment as this is the primary focus of the project.

Question: Why Should FLL Be Promoted in Academic Institutions?

The answer: People have “become more mobile, both physically and electronically” (Crystal, 2012, p. 13). In a world where the movement of people has become as unrestricted as it is, and will likely continue to be, resulting in a societal melange (on all levels) unheard of – and even unimaginable to those living in yesteryear – the reinforcement of monolingualism can only be described as outdated. Having students leave school unable to communicate in more than one

language does not present a good representation of what citizens of the future should look like. Think about it, if every person on the planet spoke but one language, globalisation as is occurring today would not be possible. In a nutshell, the pursuit of studies in foreign languages should not be viewed as an inferior or subordinate educational goal.

The Reality of Second Language Acquisition

The study conducted by Macnamara and Edwards (1973) makes it clear that students are not inclined to use a foreign language if forced to do so, even if they have the ability. As Lasagabaster et al. (2014) states, “motivation is a key aspect of second language acquisition” (p. 1). Hence, in the drafting of and eventual enactment of language policies, consideration should be given to what motivates students to learn another language. Making special reference to anglophones, Oakes (2013) explores a variety of motivating factors for FLL among which is included (a) travel; (b) avoiding embarrassment; (c) reciprocity – i.e. being able to greet others in their native language; (d) pride – demonstrating the English speakers are capable of learning a foreign language. As noted here, obligation (through policy, for example) is not listed as being a source of motivation for FLL. Moreover, Pradeau (2016) mentions the significance of autonomy in FLL. That is, successful second language acquisition requires learners to foster a personal desire or make self-directed efforts to learn the target language. Once more, obligation is not presented as being effective for stimulating FLL. Thus, this information gives a caution to SLs, and by extension policymakers. FLL should not and cannot be effectively promoted through force. Instead, learners should be helped to make connections between their future aspirations and the value or place of FLL in such a vision. By expanding their worldview and knowledge base on the evolving sociolinguistic landscape of the world, learners will be able to better appreciate the value of FLL.

Encouraging Rather than Forcing: Examining an Example in Context

To better understand the importance of promoting FLL, it may be worthwhile to consider an example of what happens when one language is favoured over another. That is, when FLL is forced on a population, rather than effectively encouraged or promoted. Certainly, the impact that it can have on a population is long-lasting and affects all areas of life. Nonetheless, for the sake of the project, the focal point will primarily be the effects on education. The example will be drawn directly from the Canadian context and deals with the sociohistorical relationship between the French and English languages in the country. This example can be deemed as representative of what occurs in other nations, as it relates to tussles between languages. Similarly, the example could have been drawn between the English language and autochthonous languages in Canada as the concept remains the same – forcing rather than encouraging FLL is detrimental to societies (Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada, 2012).

The Sociohistorical Relationship Between French and English in Canada

In considering the francophone people of Canada, the language that was being forced upon them was English. Consequently, the history of the French language in Canada has been marked by significant challenges, with francophone communities continuously fighting to assert their right to speak and live in their mother tongue. Access to education in French was often extremely limited, if not entirely absent. Power (2011) highlights these struggles, noting the situation in the predominantly French-speaking Acadian region, where the majority of educational programs were offered in English rather than French, and over time, only one academic institution provided instruction in French. As a result of ongoing linguistic discrimination, the francophone community sought legal remedies to protect their rights, leading to landmark cases such as:

- *Mahe v. Alberta*, [1990] 1 SCR 342 – The Mahe case affirmed the right of communities in a linguistic minority to manage and control the education of their children in the said minority language;
- *Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island*, [2000] 1 SCR 3 – The Arsenault-Cameron case reminded provincial governments of their obligation to provide educational facilities within local communities where French-speaking families can send their children to be educated. These students should not be forced to travel long distances to neighbouring towns to access French-language education;
- *Doucet-Boudreau v. Nova Scotia (Minister of Education)*, [2003] 3 SCR 3 – This case underscored the constitutional duty of provinces to provide access to quality education in the language of the linguistic minority. As such, provinces must not delay in addressing these educational needs by ensuring the timely provision of adequate facilities and resources.

These cases are now referenced in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, reinforcing the rights of linguistic minority groups, both French-speaking and by extension English-speaking, across Canada (Department of Justice Canada, 2022). Though there was a colonial element to the imposition of the English language, the fact remains that the French speakers in that era (particularly discussed in Power, 2011) were being forced to learn a foreign language, rather than encouraged to do so. Moreover, it was domineering to the point where they had no choice but to learn in the foreign language itself. Unfortunately, as will be discussed below, this linguistic control has had a lingering effect on this community.

Despite the passage of time, the challenges faced by the francophone community persist. As recently as 2020, the Supreme Court of Canada was called upon to rule in a case from British

Columbia, where it found that the rights of French speakers in the province were being undermined (*Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*, [2020] 1 SCR 678).

Although these occurrences highlight the lasting impact of forcing language learning upon a community, they equally highlight the importance of enacting effective language policies. In considering the legal victories, appropriate linguistic legislation is a starting point for promoting FLL among populations. How so? Thinking specifically about this situation and the implementation of Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, along with other tribunal outcomes, it allows persons firstly to access quality education in their language (or even in a language of their choosing), and subsequently, to engage in FLL in a more comfortable and productive environment. The enactment of the policy removed the forceful learning of another language, which is a wise step towards encouraging rather than forcing language learning. Likewise, the implementation of Section 23 was a step in the right direction to help Canada as a state to achieve its goal of bilingualism as it facilitates learning in either of the official languages supported through public funds. Such education must be equivalent to that provided in the majority language. Hence, this prevents parents from being compelled to send their children to schools where the majority language is spoken in hopes of obtaining better educational opportunities. In other words, students are not being forced to learn another language in order to have access to education. Therefore, as compared to its neighbour which does not even have one official language to say the least, Canada can be deemed to be a pioneer of sorts, by promoting the use of at least two languages – officially French and English – through policy.

Acknowledging the Colonial Past

Considering these events, it is clear that past colonial struggles for dominance between the anglophone and francophone communities in Canada persist, though perhaps less overtly than in the past. Molinari (2008), through the title of his work – “Anglais et français au Québec: D'une relation conflictuelle à une interaction pacifique?” (translated as "English and French in Quebec: From a contentious to peaceful relationship?") – references the historically controversial relationship between the French and English languages. In his article, Molinari (2008) concludes that a rivalry between the two languages has always existed, largely due to their colonial history and the transfer of colonial power from France to England as a result of the Treaty of Paris of 1793. At that time, this shift in colonial power led to the marginalization of the French language in governmental institutions, business, industry, and general administration within the region.

An Amusing Turn of Events

Analysis with a keen eye would show that the past colonial relationship between the two language groups in Canada has a lingering impact, particularly on the linguistic level. That is, taking Quebec as an example, the province has consistently sought to maintain its francisation, not only to safeguard the French language but also to declare it the sole official language of the province. These legislative measures include:

- Bill 63 of 1969 – mandated that children receiving their education in English must acquire a working knowledge of French;
- Bill 22 of 1974 – established French as the official language of Quebec and required immigrants to enrol in a French-language school;
- Bill 101 (also known as Law 101) of 1977 – designated French as the official language of Quebec's government and legal courts;

It must be noted, however, that these bills were not always uncontested, and many were involved in legal battles that led to the nullification of certain sections (The Canadian Encyclopaedia, 2013) because the proposed policy was overassertive.

As noted above, in more recent times (2022 for that matter) the province of Quebec has drafted Bill 96, which aims to further promote the French language by encouraging its exclusive use in all aspects of life within the province. Bill 96, formally known as, an Act respecting French, the official and common language of Quebec (Bill 96, 2022), is a legal document originating from the National Assembly of Quebec, the province's approved legislative body. The primary objective of this Act is to reaffirm French as the only official language of Quebec. Bill 96 purports to protect the French language by requiring its exclusive use across the province, with only a few exceptions, even in the healthcare sector. This Act influences nearly every aspect of daily life, including instructing businesses to avoid requiring knowledge of languages other than French for employment. Moreover, college-level educational qualifications are contingent upon proficiency in French. A recurring theme within the Act is the emphasis on the quality of French, asserting that mere knowledge of the language is insufficient. Thus, this language-based policy can be labelled as forceful and somewhat radical for the current times. In any case, it goes contrary to the motivation necessary as discussed in Macnamara and Edwards (1973), Oakes (2013), Lasagabaster et al. (2014) and Pradeau (2016).

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see why the province may feel the need to protect its language given the tumultuous past of the French language in Canada. However, as mentioned earlier, forcing FLL is not effective nor desirable. What is more, according to Macfarlane (2023) and Lemire (2022), this particular bill raises legal concerns and constitutes a visible infringement on rights protected by the Canadian Constitution, the supreme law of the land. While provinces

have certain powers to implement changes through regular legislation, they do not have the authority to amend the Constitution itself, as outlined in the constitutional provisions (Macfarlane, 2023). Macfarlane (2023) concludes that the legislation enacted through Bill 96, intended to overhaul Quebec's language laws, exceeds the powers granted to provinces and attempts, unilaterally, to amend the Constitution Act of 1867. Similarly, Lemire (2023) agrees, highlighting the potentially dangerous nature of Bill 96. He suggests that the Act could pave the way for numerous constitutional challenges that might fundamentally alter the relationship between Quebec and Canada. Furthermore, Lemire (2023) points out that the push for francization, as promoted by Bill 96 (2022), excludes other language groups and is likely to spark significant linguistic debates. In fact, such debates have already started as noted by the quantity of literature addressing the subject – consider: Vacante (2023), who purports that their effort comes across as “an attempt to scrub English from the mouths of Quebecers”.

What Can School Leaders and Policy Makers Do?

Drawing on the theory presented by Kincheloe, it is very necessary for SLs and policymakers alike to reduce the lingering effects of colonialism in the educational sector and when enacting language policies. While his focus is primarily on indigenous communities, his ideas hold broader applicability. Essentially, Kincheloe (2011) emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the differences that exist between communities, rather than imposing a single, dominant way of life as the standard. This idea is similarly applicable to linguistic diversity, where the promotion of linguistic hegemony should be avoided. To mitigate the colonial legacies of the past, efforts must be made to create a postcolonial curriculum (Kincheloe, 2011) – an educational framework that rejects exploitation and does not aim to advance one community at the expense of others. As a result, under such blissful educational

circumstances, SLs and policymakers alike would move away from forcing FLL to promoting FLL, helping students to see the usefulness of it in their lives, even if that particular language may have been linked to previous colonial oppression.

Implications For Theory and Practice

The information presented in this project provides valuable insight into the need to take action (by SLs worldwide) to foster the promotion of FLL within their institutions. It should encourage SLs to reflect on their current practices and identify concrete strategies that can be implemented to create a more effective and engaging environment for FLL. Furthermore, this project reinforces the notion that students, as future citizens, require an education that is responsive to the evolving demands of the twenty-first century (Advisory Council for Learning and Teaching in Scotland, 2002 as cited in Tisdall, 2013). As such, it serves as a reminder to SLs of their responsibility to prepare students for a globalised world by offering an education that aligns with contemporary educational needs (Sinnema & Aitken, 2013). Likewise, the information presented within this project offers a foundation for further research into the intersection between school leadership and FLL, which is currently a very understudied area in the field of education. Future investigations, whether qualitative or quantitative, could explore topics such as the most effective measures for promoting FLL or the potential impact of professional development programs that incorporate language components on SLs' attitudes toward FLL.

With specific reference to Bill 96 issuing from Quebec, this project highlights the fact that current policymaking practices are not effectively advancing FLL initiatives. This gap indicates a pressing need for policymakers to reconsider their approach to language education, with a focus on understanding the underlying factors that motivate students to engage with

foreign languages. Policymakers should give careful thought to the current state of FLL in schools and ensure that any policy decisions made are informed by the experiences and feedback of those directly involved in the educational process. For these policies to be effective, they must be grounded in the realities of the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, policymakers must acknowledge the long-term impact of their decisions, ensuring that policies are adaptable and future-proof to the extent that they prepare students for the challenges of tomorrow's world. FLL should be thoroughly integrated and promoted in contemporary education today in order to meet the needs of students living in an interconnected, globalised society, rather than reflecting outdated paradigms tied to an isolated national perspective. The historical divisions between societies, shaped by sociohistorical conflicts, should not limit the educational opportunities of today's students, particularly when those opportunities are essential for fostering global citizenship.

All in all, this project serves as an initial step for much interesting, future research – both qualitative and quantitative. The themes can address areas such as policymaking and policy implementation within the context of FLL, as well as studies examining the potential effects of Bill 96 and its broader implications for Quebec's sociolinguistic landscape. By expanding the body of research in these areas, policymakers will be better equipped to make informed decisions and develop effective strategies for promoting FLL across educational institutions. Ultimately, a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter will provide valuable resources for improving language education and helping schools adapt to the ever-changing needs of their students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that FLL has a place in education which deserves to be respected and promoted by SLs, as well as policymakers, in an effective manner. On one hand, through reflection on the sociohistorical and the sociopolitical past of Canada, it becomes very clear that the attitudes of policymakers towards FLL are crucial in determining the success or failure of any policies they implement. Canada, as a nation, aspires to be bilingual, with both French and English holding official status. However, for this ambition to be fully realized, both languages must coexist peacefully, promoting mutual respect and understanding. Therefore, restrictive policies such as Bill 96 challenges this goal. Upon examining the details of Bill 96, it is evident that policymakers may not have given sufficient attention to the intricacies of FLL. The key term here is "foreign," as the policies considered language learning in a broad sense without addressing the distinct factors involved in learning a foreign language. Specifically, policymakers failed to account for the genuine motivations that drive individuals to learn a second language, as well as the potential consequences of imposing a strict, exclusionary policy. Such policies could, in fact, lead to a migration of residents from Quebec, seeking more inclusive environments (Macnamara & Edwards, 1973). Perhaps the most critical oversight, however, lies in the failure to respect the Constitution Act of 1867, which safeguards the rights of linguistic minorities across Canada. Given these factors, it is reasonable to conclude that the measures taken by policymakers in Quebec are ineffective in promoting FLL. These policies overlook key considerations crucial to second language acquisition, and as a result, the attitudes of policymakers towards FLL appear insufficiently supportive.

In a similar vein, SLs who fail to promote FLL at their institutions are running a similar risk by inherently declaring one language as being more important or superior to another. For this

reason, it is extremely important that SLs take time to analyse their attitudes, bearing in mind the impact that they have on the teaching and learning environment at their schools, the staff and by extension, student outcomes. It is their duty to support the FLL teaching staff in any way necessary, being sure to give as much attention to their social needs as their physical ones. What is more, keeping in mind the ever-changing sociolinguistic makeup of the world, it is undeniable that FLL ought to be given weightier consideration by SLs.

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