

**UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

**THOUGHTS FROM A DIVIDED NATION: SOME ENGLISH CANADIAN  
VIEWS ON THE QUESTION OF BILINGUALISM IN CANADA AND ITS  
EFFECT ON IDENTITY FORMATION**

**A Pro Gradu Thesis in English**

**by**

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Thoughts from a Divided Nation: Some English Canadian Views on the Question of Bilingualism in Canada and Its Effect on Identity Formation

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella englantia-ranska -kaksikielisyttä Kanadassa englantia puhuvien kanadalaisten näkökulmasta ja kaksikielisuuden vaikutusta heidän identiteettinsä muodostumiseen. Aineistona on 20 narratiivia, jotka on kerätty kyselylomakkeella eri puolilta Kanadaa. Tutkielmassa vastataan kysymyksiin: 1) Kuinka englantia puhuvat kanadalaiset kokevat kaksikielisuuden Kanadassa ja millainen vaikutus sillä on heidän identiteettinsä muodostumiseen? 2) Kuinka nämä kanadalaiset määrittelevät kaksikielisyytensä ja minkälainen merkitys sillä on heille? 3) Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat heidän kieli-identiteettiinsä yleisesti? 4) Mitä muita olennaisia osia kuuluu englantia puhuvien kanadalaisten identiteettiin? Kyseessä on laadullinen tapaustutkimus, jossa pyritään kuvaamaan kanadalaista kielitilannetta tarkastelemalla kaksikielisyttä ja identiteettinäkömukseja laaja-alaisesti, mutta myös eritellysti löytämään tutkimukseen osallistuneiden narratiiveista tyypillisiä identiteetin rakennusaineita.

.....Narratiiveja tarkastellaan diskurssianalyysin ja narratiiviteorian avulla. Tavoitteena on löytää narratiiveista keskeisiä diskursseja ja tarkastella, kuinka vastaajat rakentavat merkityksiä ja kuvaavat omaa identiteettiään käyttämällä hyväksien kielellisiä ja kulttuurisia resursseja. Lisäksi analyysissä kuvataan, miten yksilöt positioivat itsensä suhteessa vallitseviin diskursseihin ja millaisia vaikutteita tässä prosessissa on.

.....Vastaajat määrittelevät kaksikielisyytensä enimmäkseen kielellisen kompetenssin kautta ja käyttävät useita kriteerejä määrittelyissään. Tutkimus osoittaa, että vastaajat tarvitsevat ranskan kieltä lähinnä koulussa, työelämässä ja sosiaalisten verkostojen ylläpitämiseen. Nämä kontekstit painottavat vastaajien funktionaalista näkemystä kielestä. Ongelmaksi koetaan ranskan näkymättömyys ja vähäinen käyttötarve suuressa osassa Kanadaa, minkä vuoksi ranskaa ei usein koeta kovin tärkeäksi. Kielten merkitys identiteetin muodostumiselle korostuu laajemmassa mielessä monikulttuurisessa Kanadassa, jossa monet säilyttävät tiiviin yhteyden alkuperäiskulttuuriinsa ja sen kieleen. Tämä aspekti monipuolistaa näkemystä eri kielten suhteesta identiteetin osina tuoden siihen myös emotionaalisen ulottuvuuden. Jännitteet ranskan- ja englanninkielisten alueiden välillä koetaan usein ongelmalliseksi, ja tällöin poliittinen diskurssi on vahvasti läsnä. Monikulttuurinen diskurssi ja siihen liitettävät yhteisöllisyyden ja tasa-arvoisuuden teemat ovat olennainen osa kanadalaista identiteettiä. Makrotasolla nämä vahvat diskurssit määrittävät osaltaan yksilöiden positiointimahdollisuuksia kanadalaisessa kontekstissa.

Asiasanat: Canada. Quebec. bilingualism. identity. multiculturalism. discourse analysis. narrative theory.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In his book about the Canadian society, Harry Hiller states the following: “If you want to create some controversy in a group of Canadians, there is no faster way to do it than to bring up the issue of bilingualism. Everyone has an opinion about bilingualism and everyone also has stories or anecdotes to tell from everyday life to justify their position”. (Hiller 2006: 258.) This statement creates a thought-provoking backdrop for a discussion about a topic that has caused controversy in the Canadian society for decades.

When thinking about the Canadian situation with regard to language and identity, one has to understand some large-scale societal developments in order to get a comprehensive view of the problematic nature of Canadian bilingualism and the resulting confusion about identity. The question of language has been a centre of considerable attention in the Canadian society for a long time. Canada has a complicated colonial history where two groups, the English and the French, have tried to find a way to reach a state of peaceful coexistence. However, according to Hiller (2006: 178-179), the increasingly difficult situation between the French-dominated Quebec and the English-dominated parts of Canada has caused some severe internal cleavages in the Canadian society. Indeed, it has been a general tendency to describe the Canadian society as consisting of two separate parts: French-Canadian and English-Canadian (Hiller 2006: 2). The role of language in this division is crucial because, as Hiller (2006: 176) points out, “the well-known French-English duality has been transformed from an *ethnic* duality into a *language* duality”. This is a rather natural outcome of such a process because language is usually the most prominent feature that distinguishes different ethnic and cultural groups from each other. Even though some notable attempts have been made to mitigate the problematic relationship between the French and English groups in Canada, the bilingualism issue still continues to arouse controversy on a national level, and the consequences of this on-going debate on the identities of individual Canadians is something worth considering.

The purpose of this study is to look at the issue of bilingualism in Canada from the English Canadians' perspective and try to find out how bilingualism affects their personal identities and perceptions of themselves as Canadians. I wanted to include the aspect of identity in the study because, based on my personal experiences in Canada, many Canadians seem to suffer from an intense identity crisis, which is partly due to the uncertain situation between Quebec and the rest of Canada and the resulting question of language. It seems like there is a general sense of confusion about what it means to be Canadian and what kinds of building blocks the Canadian identity consists of. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 19) suggest that the concept of identity becomes particularly interesting in a context where it is contested, in crisis or susceptible to various interpretations and meanings. Canadians have to form their identities in a highly diverse context where a huge variety of influences is present. They are, however, active agents in the identity formation process, and, as Hall (1999: 11, 250-254) states, identity can be seen as a meeting point where the subjective experiences of an individual connect to the social and historical contexts, thereby emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between the individual's active construction of oneself and the external influences. This discussion about the relationship of bilingualism and identity will form the core of this study.

The central questions to be addressed within this framework deal with the way the Canadians speaking English as their first language react to the French-English bilingualism and what kind of effect it has on their identity formation. The goal is to find out how they define themselves as bilingual and what bilingualism means to them. My preliminary assumption is that the French language as such does not necessarily have a highly central role in the lives of individual English Canadians, and therefore it is crucial to pay attention to other significant aspects of their linguistic identities as well in order to get a more comprehensive view of the issue. When one thinks about the notion of an English Canadian identity, or a Canadian identity in a more general sense, other issues besides language are most likely going to come up, and these other building blocks and key components of the English Canadian identity, such as multiculturalism, will be brought into the discussion as well. On the basis of these questions, the goal is to gain an understanding of the role

languages have in the identities of individual English Canadians and what other things they consider important when building their identities.

The data for this study was gathered using a question form that was sent via e-mail to participants in different parts of Canada and Finland. A total of 20 responses were received. The question form consisted of background questions considering the respondents' French language skills and views on bilingualism, and a writing task where the respondents were asked to discuss the process of identity formation as an English Canadian. This method of gathering data was chosen because the narratives and stories people tell about their lives can be seen as an important channel for constructing identities and signifying various life experiences (Pavlenko 2004: 34). Furthermore, this study leans heavily on the qualitative tradition, and personal accounts written by the respondents form a rich source of data when aiming at gaining an understanding of the individual respondents' identities. The data was analyzed by utilizing discourse analysis and narrative analysis. According to Fairclough (1992: 63-64), discourse can be seen as a practice of "signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning", and therefore discourse analysis is particularly well-suited for the purposes of this study. Narrative analysis is an effective companion for discourse analysis because it looks at the way in which people construct narratives in specific settings and what kinds of linguistic and cultural resources they utilize in this process (Pavlenko 2004: 34).

The first chapters of this study will introduce some of the previous research that has been done on the central issues dealt with in this study. Chapter 2 introduces some of the central historical and more recent events that have affected the development of bilingualism in Canada. Different definitions of bilingualism and what bilingualism means in the specific Canadian setting will also be discussed in this chapter. In Chapter 3, the concept of identity will be discussed in a general sense and then by paying special attention to the relationship of language and identity. Identity in the Canadian context and the challenges to the English Canadian identity will also be looked at. Chapter 4 concentrates on the theoretical framework of this study by introducing discourse analysis and narrative analysis and the ways in which they will be utilized in the data analysis. In Chapter 5, the methodology of this study will be

presented in the form of research questions, an introduction of the data, and the analytic framework. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the analysis of the data, and the discussion will be divided under three major headings: bilingualism, language and identity, and being Canadian. In Chapter 7, I will discuss the findings and relevance of the study and introduce some implications for future research.

## **2. BILINGUALISM IN CANADA**

### **2.1 Historical Background**

To create a framework for having a closer look at bilingualism in the Canadian context, it is essential to introduce the historical background and the most significant events that have led to the development of bilingualism in Canada. The problematic relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada is at the core of the challenging language situation in the contemporary Canadian society. This issue has been studied in great detail (see e.g. Curtis and Tepperman 1990; Mandel and Taras 1988) but for the purposes of this study, a brief introduction on the central events will suffice.

The conflict between Quebec and the rest of Canada derives from their shared colonial history. According to Hiller (2006: 5, 178), the French settlers inhabiting some of the eastern parts of Canada were placed under direct control of the British during the Conquest of 1759. Even though the French and the British are the two founding groups of Canada, the official formation of the Canadian society (Confederation of 1867) was mostly carried out on the terms of the British. The British had the greatest control over the establishment of the organizational framework of the new society, but they let the French have some control over events in Quebec. Hiller (2006: 178) further suggests that this ethnic power relationship is “at the root of the famed duality of Canadian society”, and this relationship was later to be used as a justification for the argument of the need for two official languages.

The dynamic between Quebec and the rest of Canada has existed ever since the Conquest, but the 1960s can be seen as a turning point considering the current situation. Hiller (2006: 190, 194) states that during the 1960s, the fast development and social changes in the Quebec society led to more and more French Canadians starting to be dissatisfied. French Canadians felt that they had been wrongly placed under the control of English Canadians, this position leading to a situation where French Canadians did not have equal opportunities compared to the English Canadians, English was used as the language of federal government institutions, and the existence of the French language and culture was under threat. This realization



led the French Canadians to promote their rights strongly and to demand recognition for their traditions and language. Hiller (2006: 194) continues that the federal government was alert with regard to these attitudes and changes, and thus appointed a Royal Commission to examine possibilities of establishing Canada as a bilingual and bicultural society.

As a result of the report given by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, the Official Languages Act was passed in 1969 which confirmed the status of both English and French as official languages in Canada (Hiller 2006: 194). The Commission opted for institutional / state bilingualism instead of individual bilingualism, the consequence being that the command of both languages was not compulsory for individuals but services in both French and English should be available in premier public and private institutions, and education should be available in both languages all over the country (Hiller 2006: 194). Joy (1992: 8) states that the status of French and English as the official languages of Canada was further confirmed in the Constitution Act of 1982. According to Joy (1992: 8), section 16 of the act establishes the status of both English and French as the official languages of Canada and affirms their equality in terms of their use in all institutions of the Parliament and the Government of Canada. The only officially bilingual province to this day is New Brunswick, which became bilingual in 1969 (Edwards 1994: 43). The status of French as the official language of Quebec was solidified by Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language, in 1977, and this event marked the linguistic distinctiveness of Quebec even more than before (Hiller 2006: 202).

Hiller (2006: 194) claims that establishing both English and French as official languages in order to make Canada “an equal partnership between the two founding races” still provokes a great deal of debate. According to Hiller (2006: 193), official bilingualism was supposed to make French Canadians feel included in the Canadian society and to confirm their equal status with English Canadians. It was supposed to bring coherence and unity to the Canadian society but “instead of embracing bilingualism, Quebec has increasingly supported greater unilingualism, challenging federal policy”. Since the 1960s, Quebec has demonstrated a growing willingness for self-determination and the provincial government has acted as an active agent in

promoting Quebec's mission. Hiller (2006: 193) claims that "refusal to sign the new federal constitution --- in 1982 --- symbolized Quebec's fusion of historical and contemporary group consciousness". Bourhis (1994: 8) points out that the increasing concentration of French Canadians in Quebec and English Canadians in the rest of Canada had caused the bottom to fall out of the entire bilingualism policy. It is noteworthy that the constant negotiations between French Canadians and English Canadians about their language rights has led to other ethnic groups seek recognition as well, and this caused the replacement of the misleading definition of 'bilingualism' with the more accurate 'bilingualism within a multicultural framework' and eventually the formation of multiculturalism as a national policy (Hiller 2006: 194). The core of the multiculturalism policy is to allow all ethnic groups, including French Canadians and English Canadians, to celebrate their origins in the Canadian cultural mosaic and to promote tolerance in the Canadian society (Mackey 1999: 2). However, the realization of these ideals in the Canadian society is rather complicated, and the events and changes in the societal level pose challenges also to individual Canadians who try to establish their own identities.

As it has been noted above, the tense linguistic situation continues to create controversy in the Canadian society. It seems that the official policy of bilingualism and its implications for individual Canadians remain rather unclear, and it causes a great deal of confusion and frustration. This kind of situation creates a fruitful starting point for looking at the concept of identity in the English Canadian framework and the importance of bilingualism to these individuals.

## 2.2 Definitions of Bilingualism

The discussion above about the historical background of the Canadian bilingualism has already given some indication of the nature of bilingualism in the specific Canadian context but this issue needs to be elaborated further. Research generally suggests that it is highly difficult to give an exhaustive definition of bilingualism so that all of its aspects would be equally included (see e.g. Baker 2001; Hamers and Blanc 2000). Therefore, in this section my aim is to introduce some of the central definitions of bilingualism, which are especially relevant in the Canadian context. Some aspects of second-language learning in general are also introduced in order to offer explanations for the language behavior of the English-speaking Canadians.

Previous research has shown that when discussing bilingualism, a distinction must be made between bilingualism as a characteristic of an individual and bilingualism on a collective level (see e.g. Hamers and Blanc 2000; Baker 2001). This distinction leads to two broad definitions of bilingualism: Individual bilingualism and societal bilingualism (Baker 2001: 2). Hamers (1981, as quoted by Hamers and Blanc 2000: 6) suggests that individual bilingualism is “a psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication; the degree of access will vary along a number of dimensions which are e.g. social and linguistic”. In turn, societal bilingualism refers to the contact and use of two languages in a community where both languages can be used for communication and a number of people are bilingual. According to Baker (2001: 4-5), an individual’s bilingual abilities (listening, speaking, reading and writing) can develop differently so that a bilingual individual is more proficient in some areas than others. The nature of individual bilingualism can be examined further using the dimensions of bilingualism. Valdés and Figueroa (1994, as quoted by Baker 2001: 3) claim that bilinguals can be classified by the age of language learning, the four language abilities mentioned above, the balance of two languages, the development of two languages in relation to each other, the context for learning and using two languages, and whether learning a language has been voluntary (elective bilingualism) or a precondition for survival in one’s surroundings (circumstantial bilingualism).

The dimension of competence is crucial when determining different types of bilingualism because it draws attention to the relative nature of bilingualism. According to Lambert (1955, as quoted by Hamers and Blanc 2000: 27), a balanced bilingual is equally competent in two languages, whereas a dominant bilingual knows one language, usually the mother tongue, better than the other one. It should be borne in mind, however, that the languages a person knows are never static but they keep changing and developing depending on the circumstances (Baker 2001: 15). Therefore, the definition of a holistic view of bilingualism introduced by Cook (1992, as quoted by Baker 2001: 8-9) seems especially relevant because it sees bilingualism as a dynamic entity. In this view, a bilingual varies one's language use depending on the context and who one is communicating with and for what reason. The bilingual's competence level in two languages depends on the context and the frequency of using a language, and a bilingual may be more competent in some domains with one language than the other. This view emphasizes the multi-faceted nature of bilingualism, allowing individual differences in proficiency and condemning any strict and rigid classifications, and therefore it is applicable in the Canadian context where individuals' competence in the official languages varies notably due to regional differences and other factors. The holistic view of bilingualism shares many characteristics with functional bilingualism where a bilingual's language use is determined by the demands of various everyday activities, contexts and domains such as school, family, leisure and friends (Baker 2001: 12-13). A functional bilingual may, for example, need two languages in the workplace and therefore maintaining a high level of proficiency in both languages is of great importance. These individual-oriented definitions of bilingualism serve as a basis when looking at the language use of English Canadians.

As it has been noted above, people's language use is often determined by the context. Baker (2001: 44) suggests that individuals speaking two or more languages can often be found in specific networks, communities, and sometimes in specific regions. Speech or language communities where individuals speak a minority language within a majority language environment are common as well. Baker (2001: 44) continues that the alternating use of two languages within a language community is determined

by the demands of the specific circumstances. It should also be noted that the use of one language may not even be possible at all times, language choice thus becoming an important issue (Baker 2001: 13). Milroy (1980, as quoted by Hamers and Blanc 2000: 21) draws attention to the ways in which the structures of social networks affect the individual's language behaviour. Ingroup solidarity is crucial in close-knit networks where local practices and language forms take precedence over standard conventions. In this kind of network, deviating language behaviour is not usually appreciated. In turn, more simple and loose network structures allow more flexible and diverse language practices and adoption of outside influences. It is therefore clear that the environment can pose several challenges to an individual language user, and to overcome these challenges one often needs to navigate within a complex network of norms and practices. This is the case in Quebec where loyalty to the French language can be rather overwhelming and it therefore poses intense challenges to English speakers trying to survive in their surroundings.

Burck (2005: 27) states that "being bicultural and bilingual or multilingual involves not only a positioning in several cultures/languages, but also a positioning in relation to the differences between the cultures and languages, finding a way to relate different and sometimes contradictory cultural perspectives for oneself". Hamers and Blanc (2000: 30) continue that cultural identity is an essential defining characteristic of bilinguals. A bilingual may feel a connection to and gain recognition by both cultural groups using the languages one speaks, and therefore one can also be defined as bicultural. This is often the case with balanced bilinguals. Burck (2005: 25) notes, however, that the process of positioning oneself within two cultures can be difficult because the pressure to acculturate is usually very strong. Hamers and Blanc (2000: 203) give the Quebec context as an example where the defence of linguistic rights has basically ended up being the core of national identity. In this context the English-speaking minority must feel intense pressure to conform to the norms and practices of the majority language group, and this kind of example sheds light on the complicated nature of the Canadian bilingualism.

In the Canadian context where everybody must learn both official languages to at least some extent, motivation becomes an important aspect for explaining

individuals' language behaviour and learning. Research on bilingualism and multilingualism has suggested several outcomes of second language learning. Baker (2001: 123) draws attention to attitudes and motivation as the crucial factor in success or failure of second language learning. Baker (2001: 123) also makes a distinction between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, the previous referring to an individual's yearning to identify with or join a specific language group and the latter to an individual's motivation to learn a language for beneficial and practical purposes. Second language learning can also be an asset in gaining cultural awareness, developing cognitive skills, and reaching affective goals (e.g. self-confidence) as well as improving career prospects and facilitating access to higher education and information resources (Baker 2001: 111-113). Lazaruk (2007: 623) suggests that bilinguals usually have well-developed creative thinking skills and they demonstrate high levels of communicative sensitivity. Bilingualism also offers an individual a rich range of discursive and interactional resources, which allow greater flexibility of language use and can also be effectively utilized in claiming identities (Burck 2005: 30).

In general, bilinguals have a broad range of resources and strategies to communicate accurately and effectively in different contexts and with different people, to interpret and react to other people's language use in its entirety, and to reach interactive goals by utilizing one's broad cultural awareness (Baker 2001: 130-131). The reasons and motivation for second language learning are a crucial issue in the Canadian context because the establishment of official bilingualism has not been completely successful at least on the level of individual Canadians, many of whom do not consider themselves bilingual even though the official ideal has been for every Canadian to become bilingual at least to some extent. Therefore it is essential to study the opinions and viewpoints of individual English Canadians to find out the reasons and motivation for learning and maintaining competence in both official languages. The motivations of Canadians for second language learning, and learning French in particular, are presented in more detail in section 2.3.

Burck (2005: 31-37) has studied the meanings multilingual individuals give to and take from their languages, how culture affects this process and what kinds of

relational issues arise, and how individuals handle the differences between their languages and cultures in their everyday lives. Burck interviewed 24 individuals representing different cultures, language groups and paths of language learning. What is especially interesting from my research point of view is Burck's notion that it is a rather recent phenomenon to include speakers' own accounts when studying these issues; it has been more common to study the individuals' actual language use than to pay attention to the way in which individuals themselves reflect on it. In this sense, my study has a chance of bringing some fresh insights about the way in which individual language users reflect on their linguistic identity in a specific cultural context. Burck (2005: 44) used discursive approaches to find out how individuals construct and claim identities and how personal, social, and cultural aspects are intertwined. Furthermore, Burck (2005: 33) utilized narrative theory in her analysis, paying attention to the ways in which individuals using several languages form different narratives of themselves depending on the specific cultural and linguistic context. Burck (2005: 33) further states that "interviewing individuals themselves concerning their diverse experiences in several languages offers us perspectives through which to explore and contribute to the theorization of 'multiple subjectivity'". Burck's research framework is highly interesting and applicable because it draws both on discursive and narrative resources to study the experiences of individual language users in a bilingual/multilingual setting, and is therefore closely connected to the aims of my study.

Some of the main results of Burck's (2005: 99-100) study indicate that the process of learning a new language had generally changed the individuals but the changes were usually seen positively. New languages were perceived as providing a new and different identity, a wider range of ways to express oneself, and a possibility to shake the conventional norms of everyday communication by utilizing the resources offered by one's linguistic repertoire. Some childhood experiences had included problems with reaching a sense of belonging or a satisfactory identity position, but adults were grateful for the opportunities the new language had offered them, despite having possibly faced discrimination. In these cases learning a new language had been constructed as a choice and opportunity. Different contexts usually affected the meanings individuals attached to their languages, and using several languages meant

that individuals experienced a different sense of themselves in each of them. This usually led to the construction of multiple identities which may be valued and utilized differently depending on the context. Identities were actively constructed in communication with others. Individuals had usually different relationships with all their languages. First languages were usually perceived as offering a great resource of expressiveness and second languages offered a chance of distancing oneself. Language was often considered a symbol of a specific identity and sense of self. These results clearly suggest that knowing and using several languages has a significant effect on one's identity construction. It is therefore safe to assume that bilingualism poses a challenge to one's identity as well. All in all, Burck's study gives useful insights into the ways in which the question of identity can be addressed in bilingual contexts and how the stories of individual language users can be used in the analysis.

### **2.3 Bilingualism in the Canadian Context**

The nature of bilingualism in the Canadian context can be illustrated by introducing some statistics. Hiller (2006: 22, 23, 205) states, adapting information from Statistics Canada, that only approximately one in six Canadians considers oneself French-English bilingual, this number having grown slightly over the last 30 years. French Canadians are more likely to be bilingual, 43.4% of them being bilingual whereas only 9% of English Canadians are bilingual. In Quebec, approximately two thirds of English Canadians are bilingual whereas only about one third of French Canadians are bilingual. In the rest of Canada, over 85% of French Canadians are bilinguals whereas only 7% of English Canadians are bilingual. These statistics are rather striking considering the fact that the prevailing undertone of the official bilingualism policy was to encourage all Canadians to strive towards individual bilingualism (Hiller 2006: 205). However, it seems that, as Safty (1992: 63-64) states, bilingualism is unevenly distributed in Canada. Hiller (2006: 22) notes that the highest rates of bilingualism can be found in Quebec (40.8%) and New Brunswick (34.2%) whereas the rates are the lowest in Newfoundland (4.1%) and Saskatchewan (5.1%), the rate being 10% or less in most of the other provinces. It is noteworthy in



this context that in the provinces west from Ontario, the low rates of French-English bilingualism are countered by a notably higher rate of bilingualism including some non-official language (Hiller 2006: 22-23). As can be concluded from these statistics, bilingualism is not necessarily an issue of everyday life for a great number of English Canadians, and therefore it is thought-provoking to bring up the question of language identity in this context to see the extent to which languages play an important role in the process of identity formation.

The statistics discussed above are rather alarming, taking into account the historical background of Canadian bilingualism, the tension between Quebec and the rest of Canada, and the ongoing striving to reach an equal and balanced co-existence of the two groups and their languages. Hiller (2006: 205) introduces Richard Joy's (1972) *bilingual belt thesis*, which suggests that "two languages of unequal strength cannot coexist in intimate contact". Linguistic segregation is causing linguistic minorities to disappear because English as a minority language in Quebec is facing serious challenges concerning its existence, and French is correspondingly struggling with the same problem in the rest of Canada. The bilingual belt where both languages can still be used side by side is located along the border of Quebec. Hiller (2006: 205) concludes that "in spite of the existence of linguistic minorities, Canada seems to have moved towards territorial unilingualism, with bilingual institutions at the core". In sum, it seems that the original idea of the bilingualism policy has gone seriously astray, and the tense societal setting makes it difficult for individual language users to follow official recommendations with regard to bilingualism, making the situation of English Canadians rather interesting. In this kind of context where French is not necessarily very visible in individual English Canadians' surroundings, the importance of the French language to these individuals is something worth considering.

Hamers and Blanc (2000: 21-22) state that two languages in contact in a specific societal setting can be utilized "to a different extent, in different domains and for different functions in a state of functional equilibrium". However, upsetting this state at one level will upset the state at all other levels as well. If the balance and use of two languages at the societal level changes, it will affect the language behaviour of

social networks and individual language users. This process works also conversely from the individual level to the societal level. Baker (2001: 14) continues that also an individual's own attitudes and preferences guide the choice of which language to use. Baker states that bilinguals may prefer to use their native language instead of using the dominant language if the native language is considered to be in an inferior position, thereby strategically reinforcing the status of the native language. The refusal of some French Canadians to speak English in shops and other social settings in Quebec acts as a good example. It seems that the weak representation of the French language outside the bilingual belt makes it very difficult for English Canadians to establish French as a part of their linguistic repertoire and to maintain the skills they may already have.

The educational system is the most obvious channel for promoting the policy of bilingualism throughout Canada. Hiller (2006: 205) claims that second-language education has been rather strongly promoted throughout the school system. However, the curriculum might be notably different in different provinces and territories (Canadian Education Association 2007: 1). Teaching of French as a second language is introduced through a variety of programs (Lazaruk 2007: 605-607). The most basic option is *core French*, aiming to provide the pupils with a basic competence level in French. MacFarlane (2005, as quoted by Lazaruk 2007: 607) points out that approximately 83% of Canadian students learning French as a second language take core French. *French immersion* aims at the students becoming bilingual and is therefore a more demanding program (Baker 2001: 204). In the French immersion program, French is the primary teaching language (Turnbull, Lapkin and Hart 1998, as quoted by Baker 2001: 205). Hiller (2006: 205) notes that about 9% of all Canadian students attend French immersion. *Extended French* is a program where French is used as the teaching language for one or two core subjects and French Language Arts (Lazaruk 2007: 607). *Intensive French* is the newest program alternative (MacFarlane 2005, as quoted by Lazaruk 2007: 607). In this program, core French is enhanced by an intensive period of French covering half a school year (Lazaruk 2007: 607).

The description of the Canadian school system's approach to teaching French indicates that there has been considerable effort to implement second language teaching as an essential part of the curriculum. Students attending French immersion are supposed to have a high competence level in French by the time they leave high school (Lazaruk 2007: 605-607). Lazaruk (2007: 606) continues that French immersion programs provide the students with "significant linguistic, academic, and cognitive benefits", and learning of French is not supposed to interfere with the students' English skills. Furthermore, Baker (2001: 237) suggests that immersion programs may even help to promote a more peaceful co-existence of the two language groups by supporting French communities and offering more opportunities for French Canadians outside Quebec.

However, even if learning French has some undeniable benefits, there are some setbacks in the process. Baker (2001: 199-200) states that mainstream education is not usually enough for the students to achieve a level of functional bilingualism. Most English Canadian students end up having a very limited competence in French, which is often not even enough for them to communicate with French Canadians in French. Harley (1994, as quoted by Hamers and Blanc 2000: 336) points out that few French immersion graduates have utilized their French skills after leaving school and even though the maintenance of French skills was considered essential, motivation was usually the biggest obstacle. It is also worth noting that relatively few English Canadians outside Quebec hear French on a regular basis and it is not a prominent feature of everyday life; therefore the issue of bilingualism is "a discourse with little connection to social reality" in many parts of Canada (Redhead 2002: 57). This issue is further problematized by Kinginger's (2004: 221) notion that "second language learners are people who are learning the language of the communities where they live, and are assumed to have both stronger motivations and more access to the language than foreign language learners". Taking these views into account, it is very challenging for most English Canadians to maintain functional second language skills because French is not very visible in their surroundings, and therefore it is interesting to see what kind of role it has on their language identities.

Even though the role of French in the Canadian society and especially among the English Canadians looks rather worrying, the attitudes of Canadians towards second language learning are rather promising. Parkin and Turcotte (2004, as quoted by Lazaruk 2007: 622-623) found out in their study that 88% of Canadians consider knowing several languages an asset in the field of economy. Economic reasons are not, however, the only thing that motivates Canadians to learn a second language. 82% of Canadians feel that knowing a second language leads to personal fulfillment. Two-thirds of the research participants mentioned bilingualism as one of the defining features of being Canadian, and two-thirds of English Canadians outside Quebec believed that learning French may enhance the coherence of the country as an entity. Safty (1991, as quoted by Safty 1992: 62) points out that factors related to e.g. socio-economic mobility and globalization have encouraged Canadians to enroll in French immersion programs. Lazaruk (2007: 622) continues that knowing French is an important asset in the Canadian job market and also internationally because in some fields (e.g. airlines) proficiency in French is a requirement. Learning French also enhances an individual's cultural awareness and offers possibilities to interact with a wide range of people in Canada and abroad.

The bilingualism issue in Canada is a rather thought-provoking phenomenon because it seems to have a tremendous impact on the formation of identity on the national level as well as on the level of individual Canadians. How is it possible to accomplish a sense of unity in a competing atmosphere where two different groups have their own motives and goals? The discussion above indicates that bilingualism plays a more significant role in the lives of French Canadians than of English Canadians in general. The extent to which this language issue has significance to individual English Canadians and their identity is going to be looked at within the framework of this study.

### 3. IDENTITY

#### 3.1 Identity in General

The concept of identity has a central role in this study. In this section, the aim is to give an overview on both individual-oriented and group-oriented definitions of identity because, due to the complexity of the concept, both aspects must be considered in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of their reciprocal relationship and its relevance for the data analysis.

In a general sense, identity can be defined as follows: “On the one hand, identity is about ‘sameness’ --- on the other hand, identity is about who one is uniquely” (Joseph 2004: 37). According to Castells (2004: 6), “identity is people’s source of meaning and experience”. Identity is a very relevant issue in the contemporary society because, as Pietikäinen, Dufva and Laihiala-Kankainen (2002: 10)<sup>1</sup> have suggested, rapid societal, political, economical, and social changes have challenged the way in which identity has been perceived traditionally. As a result, identity crises are a common phenomenon in today’s world (ibid.). This definition aims at describing the tension of on one hand wanting to maintain an impression of a stable identity and on the other trying to understand the forces that cause the identity to change. This is a very interesting point because, based on my own experiences and observations in Canada, it seemed that a lot of Canadians were struggling with an identity crisis, which was often due to various complicated issues on a societal level, the language situation being one of them. Therefore the specific Canadian context offers a rich framework for having a closer look at the way in which individuals construct perceptions of themselves.

An important feature of identity worth considering is its multiplicity. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 16) state that earlier research on language and identity concentrated usually on only one aspect, e.g. ethnicity. More recent studies have acknowledged the importance of understanding identity as an entity where various

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<sup>1</sup> The references from this book have been translated by the present author.

features such as age, class, race, and gender redefine and modify each other. This kind of approach is highly justifiable because, as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 16) further state, “individuals often shift and adjust ways in which they identify and position themselves in distinct contexts”. Pietikäinen et al. (2002: 9) propose that an individual can indeed have multiple identities, one gaining more importance than the others depending on the circumstances. Negotiations about the contents, characteristics, and meanings of identities take place on global, national, local, and individual levels. Because this negotiation process takes place on such varied levels, questions concerning identity offer an interesting point of view for looking at societal changes, relations between groups and the position of an individual among these changes. As it becomes clear from these notions, the influence of one’s surroundings cannot be undermined when considering the way in which identities are constructed. However, Castells (2004: 7) emphasizes “the process of self-construction and individuation” that identities involve, and thus brings the focus back to the individual as an active agent in identity formation.

Grossberg (1996: 91-92) introduces a set of theoretical concepts for analyzing identity. *Fragmentation* emphasizes the multifaceted nature of identity. Identity is composed of various pieces that may even be conflicting with each other. These pieces may derive from various different sources, such as personal history, social environment or societal changes. Different parts of identity may sometimes gain a more important role than the others depending on the situation. *Hybridity* is close to the idea of fragmentation because it also draws attention to the multifaceted nature of identity, but as its distinctive feature it emphasizes the mixing of the different parts of identity and the formation of new entities. The concept of *border* is essential in all definitions of identity. All these definitions draw a line somewhere by including some aspects and blocking out others. The concept of border is especially essential when trying to draw a line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. *Diaspora* refers to the development of identities in new cultural and historical circumstances. This concept does not tie identity to some specific geographical location but more specifically to shared experiences of change, dispersion and resettling. This classification offers a relevant tool for data analysis because it succeeds in pointing out various important

features of identity in a consistent manner and drawing attention to the dynamic nature of the aspects of identity visible in the data.

To shed light on a more group-oriented view of identity, Pietikäinen et al. (2002: 11-12) introduce the dynamics of identity, referring to the work of Grossberg (1996) and Hall (1999). There are two views on how identity can be conceptualized: essentialist and non-essentialist. The essentialist view sees identity as relatively precise and stable. Members of a group share some specific markers of identity such as language, nationality and customs. It is essential for the members of the group to protect and reinforce the shared identity. In contrast, the non-essentialist view sees identity as versatile and flexible. Its main focus is on the different identities a group may possess, the changes that have taken place in those identities, and the reasons behind and consequences of those changes. As a kind of synthesis, Hall (1999: 11, 250-254) sees identity as a meeting point where the subjective experiences of an individual connect to the social and historical contexts, thereby emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between the individual's active construction of oneself and the external influences. Past, present and future are all reflected in this process. This definition of identity contains features from both the essentialist and non-essentialist view: the identity of one's own group and its characteristics are emphasized in order to distinguish from others and to maintain the own group, but new and changing circumstances require adjustment and modification of identity. These contrasting views are very applicable when studying the dynamics between English Canadian and French Canadian groups, because they pay considerable attention to the broader social context and environment without forgetting the active input of the individual. These group-oriented views of identity act conveniently as a background for more individual-oriented analysis.

### **3.2 Language and Identity**

Language and identity as a target of research have gained growing interest during the last ten years (De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg 2006: 1). Language can be considered as one of the most important features of identity because, as Joseph (2004: 188)

claims, “language is so thoroughly and intricately bound up with human identity, on every level from the personal to the national and beyond, that, outside of trivial contexts, no real separation between them is possible”. Baker (2006:407) suggests that identity is “socially created and claimed through language, through an intentional negotiation of meanings and understandings. We speak a language or languages and it often identifies our origins, history, membership and culture.” These are very relevant definitions of identity because, in a way, they validate the choice of looking at the concept of identity from the language point of view. They also draw further attention to the importance of social context, culture and society in the identity formation process. These definitions help in positioning English Canadians and French Canadians in their own social and cultural contexts, and they give an indication of the most relevant features that must be borne in mind when analyzing the role of language in the identities of individual English Canadians.

When discussing linguistic identity, Joseph (2004: 15-16) states that communication and representation have been traditionally listed as the main functions of language, with expression also recognized as its own entity. Representation means the process of “learning to categorize things using the words our language provides us with” (Joseph 2004: 15). All these functions are highly important when creating an understanding of language as a system but, as Joseph (2004: 23-25) mentions, the meaningfulness of language entails other aspects as well. Indeed, linguistic identity research and the field of sociolinguistics have traditionally drawn attention to the features of language which complement the impression a hearer gets of a speaker, i.e. clues about a speaker’s geographical and social origin, gender, age, level of education, and so on. Joseph (2004: 24) calls these clues “categorical identities into which we routinely group people”. In the context of this study, an important observation is that even though written data may lack some of the additional clues present in spoken language, these aspects of language are still present in the respondents’ narratives to some extent and they provide valuable information on the ways in which individuals position themselves in particular social and cultural contexts and how they form the linguistic side of their identities.



The reciprocal relationship between language and identity deserves to be elaborated further. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 14) point out that languages and the specific discourses they contain provide people with linguistic means which are used to construct and negotiate identities. Conversely, “ideologies of language and identity guide ways in which individuals use linguistic resources to index their identities and to evaluate the use of linguistic resources by others” (ibid.). Pietikäinen et al. (2002: 10) suggest that language acts as a kind of discursive playfield for creating, changing and evaluating identities. People use language to navigate in their surroundings, and language and its meanings are connected to the context in which they are used and to the power relations, norms, and values of that specific context. Language is also closely connected to culture, which is the network of traditions and ways of thinking that unite people. These notions are particularly interesting in the Canadian context where people navigate among various languages often on a daily basis. In a bilingual country, languages may be used in different contexts and for different purposes and one has to make conscious decisions about how and where to use a specific language, and people may contribute different meanings to languages depending on the circumstances.

Another important aspect of linguistic identity is the relationship between the mother tongue and other languages. Joseph (2004: 185) emphasizes the crucial role of the mother tongue in the construction of an individual’s linguistic identity and in the process of claiming a particular national, ethnic or religious identity. Joseph (2004: 185) states that “we have a particular attachment and allegiance to the languages in which we think, classify, interpret, imagine and dream”. The mother tongue is thus of great importance to an individual but, as Joseph (2004: 185) further states, linguistic identity is composed of several layers and therefore second languages may have an important role in one’s identity. Second language learning is a significant linguistic practice that people may utilize to position themselves (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004: 22-23). Knowing several languages allows people to “move around in multidimensional social spaces, and each act of speaking or silence may constitute for them an ‘act of identity’” (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004: 8). Learning another language may, for example, mark access to specific social networks, thereby affecting the process of forming a coherent identity (Kinging 2004: 219-220). An

interesting aspect of analysis in this study is to see what kinds of meanings the respondents, them being English Canadians, attach to English as their first language and, in the case of people who define themselves as bilingual, to French (or possibly some other language) as their second language. In some cases drawing the line between two languages may not even be that clear-cut, and the role which each language gets assigned in this process is a significant detail worth considering when it comes to the formation of identity.

Having considered language and identity on an individual level, a more group-oriented approach should be drawn into discussion as well because, as it has been noted above, the broader social context cannot be ignored when it comes to the question of identity. Dufva (2002: 24-25)<sup>2</sup> points out that a language group forms its own collective language identity which marks the group's mutual understanding. This shared identity is usually positive, meaning that the group's own language is valued and appreciated. Dufva continues that the group's language identity often acts as a basis for the members to assess their own language as well as their own roles as users of this language and also to reflect on other language groups and their languages. A thought-provoking notion is that language identity is thus a tool for differentiating from others, and drawing the line does not usually happen neutrally or without value judgments. (Dufva 2002: 24-25.) The slightly negative undertone of this statement can be directly connected to the Canadian context because, as it has been noted in the previous chapters, the debate around the language situation in Canada has been at times rather heated and people tend to have quite strong opinions about and attitudes toward this issue. The data of this study provides some insights to the way in which the respondents position themselves as members of specific language groups and what kinds of attitudes and reasons direct this process.

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<sup>2</sup> The references from Dufva's article have been translated by the present author.

### **3.3 Identity in the Canadian Context and Challenges to the English Canadian Identity**

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the identities of individual English Canadians, some aspects concerning the relationship between national identity and language identity must be considered as well. Joseph (2004: 95) points out that the essential role of language in formation of national identity has been widely recognized in identity research over the last forty years. Burck (2005:27) complements this observation by stating that language has a significant role as “the carrier of national and cultural identity”. This proves again that studying the relationship between language and individuals’ identities cannot be detached from the broader cultural context. Therefore, attention has to be paid to the macro context as well in order to understand small-scale developments in more depth. Bilingualism is closely connected to the notion of culture in the Canadian context because language is an important marker of different cultural groups. Dufva (2002: 23) states that most countries in the world have several different language groups and as a result also several language identities. In an ideal situation different language groups can co-exist peacefully, acknowledging each others’ identities and rights. However, this is not always the case. Language rights often end up being a target of dispute and linguistic minorities may face discrimination. Petkova (2005:54) argues that it can be difficult to try to establish a cultural identity of a group if the community itself is going through difficulties, and this can lead the members of the community to experience anxiety and uncertainty. This kind of development is present in the contemporary Canadian society with regard to the relations of Quebec and the rest of Canada, and it should be borne in mind when studying the effect of bilingualism on the identity construction of individual English Canadians.

In addition to language, national identity contains several other components, which may have repercussions on the identities of individual citizens as well. According to Smith (1991: 14), national identity is an inherently multidimensional entity which includes features such as a historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, and a common public culture. Smith (1991: 17) continues that “the nation is also called upon to provide a social bond between individuals and

classes by providing repertoires of shared values, symbols and traditions. By the use of symbols --- members are reminded of their common heritage and cultural kinship and feel strengthened and exalted by their sense of common identity and belonging". An important notion with regard to this study is that national identity offers individuals a shared object of identification: the collective identity and the specific culture can be seen as resources which the individuals use as a reference when locating themselves in their immediate surroundings and the world in general (Smith 1991: 17).

Hughes (1998: 58) has studied the contents and dimensions of English Canada's self-image, referred to as Perceived National Identity. Some of the main results of Hughes' (1998: 115, 166, 175) study show that the Canadian national identity is marked by contradictions and ambivalence. Even though the national self-image is mostly seen as positive, there seems to be general confusion about what it means to be Canadian. Canadians tend to compare themselves to their southern neighbor, the USA, and to define themselves in terms of their American- or non-American-ness. Canadians feel that they lack some of the essential features usually associated with Americans, such as patriotism and self-assertiveness, and therefore they look for other positive attributes in order to feel less inferior to Americans and to establish a distinct Canadian identity. Hughes (1998: 115, 162) suggests that multiculturalism, bilingualism and social welfare, for example, are important markers of the inherent altruism and compassion of Canadian people, and they strengthen Canadians' positive perception of their national self-image. However, even though Canadians are proud of their country's progress towards implementing the commonly cherished multicultural and egalitarian goals, they feel that the process of implementation has been relatively insufficient because inequality, injustice and intolerance are still viewed to be common phenomena in Canadian society. These results are highly interesting because they shed light on the macro-level Canadian identity, which can be used as a reference when analyzing how the same issues that affect the country as a whole also have an effect on how individual English Canadians perceive themselves.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 1-3) introduce some relevant issues to be considered in the contemporary multilingual societies. They state that in multilingual settings, political arrangements, power relations, and language ideologies are bound to have an effect on language choices and attitudes. Social, economic, and political changes may restrict the options of identities an individual can choose from, and specific identities may be generally more valued or equal than others depending on the circumstances. Globalization and the postcolonial processes of national identity formation, for example, can have an effect on the range of identities available. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 1-3) draw attention to the role of English as a global language and to the existence of linguistic nationalist movements, which may question the issue of bilingualism. These are interesting points to consider in the Canadian context where both English and French are official languages, and French is inevitably placed in an awkward position, being the language of a minority. The nationalist movements in Quebec concerning e.g. their language rights have affected the Canadian society greatly and have had consequences on individual Canadians' lives as well. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 2-3) suggest that negotiation of identities is essential in this kind of situation, the negotiations taking place on various levels ranging from individuals to minority and majority groups as well as dominant institutions. One is led to conclude that negotiation is an ongoing process which language users must engage in on a regular basis. A lot of the processes described above take place on a national level but, as the existence of individuals is intertwined with large-scale social processes, it is interesting to see how the respondents reflect on these issues.

## **4. DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY**

### **4.1 Discourse Analysis, Narrative Theory and the Study of Identity**

For the analysis of the research data I needed to find a method that could be effectively applied to the analysis of written data and that would help to discern important themes from the data on the basis of linguistic features and more general constructions that can be found. Discourse analysis seemed to be a good choice because it can be applied to numerous different purposes. According to Fairclough (1992: 63-64), “discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning”, further referring to “language use as a form of social practice”. Fairclough (2003:129) develops the idea of a discourse further by stating that a discourse can represent some specific part of the surrounding world from a specific perspective. In the context of discourse analysis, Johnstone (2005: 25, 30, 233) draws attention to the linguistic tradition of description, pointing out that one important goal of linguistic research is to describe the world as it is, and in this process one can find out important aspects of how discourse, shaped by larger social forces, both reflects and creates individuals’ worldviews.

As a synthesis of these general views, when analysing data, one can identify the main themes of a specific representation and find out the perspective from which the representation is given. This kind of approach will provide proper tools for analysing the kind of data used in this study because it draws attention to the content of the participants’ narratives and more specifically to the viewpoints from which the accounts are given and what kinds of underlying values and assumptions are present. As Martin and Rose (2007: 4) insightfully summarize, “discourse analysis employs the tools of grammarians to identify the roles of wordings in passages of text, and employs the tools of social theorists to explain why they make the meanings they do”, thereby acknowledging the interdisciplinary nature of discourse analysis and the versatile ways in which it can be utilized in analysing various kinds of texts. A more detailed description of the linguistic tools used in this study is given in section 4.2.

Fairclough (2003: 2) draws further attention to the social nature of discourse by stating that language is an inseparable part of social life, which is in a dialectical relationship with other elements of social life. It is noteworthy that identities are not created in a vacuum: when considering a person's language use and identity, the social environment is bound to have a significant effect on the way in which one constructs an understanding of oneself, and language has an important role in this process. Therefore, taking a closer look at the language issues in the specific Canadian context is fruitful because the language situation has been rather complicated on a national level for decades and it has had significant repercussions on individual Canadians' lives both on a practical and a more profound and personal level. The aim of the questionnaire for gathering the data was to give the respondents a chance to reflect freely on these issues and to provide important insights on how bilingualism has affected their lives and the process of building their identities as Canadians. As Fairclough (2003: 25) points out, "texts are not just effects of linguistic structures and orders of discourse, they are also effects of other social structures, and of social practices in all their aspects". The utilization of social resources in the creation of narratives draws further attention to the dialectical nature of language and social life, and thus builds a convenient starting point for the data analysis. When talking about discourse and identity, Johnstone (2005: 223-224) further states that the relationship between discourse and personal identity can be looked at by using the idea of performance where an individual's identity comes across as a presentation of self. Therefore the narratives written by the respondents can be seen as presentations where they deal with issues important to them, and in the process of reflecting on these issues they construct presentations of themselves, thus offering important insights on the topic of my study.

Another tool for the analysis of the data used in this study is narrative theory. A lot of the research in the field of narrative analysis concentrates on narratives in the traditional sense, such as novels and stories (refer to e.g. Toolan 1988), but in a more general sense the concept of a narrative can be applied to other kinds of texts as well. A basic definition sees a narrative as "a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or a series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (Czarniawska 2004: 17). A narrative can be described more broadly as an organizing

principle which people use to make sense of their experiences and knowledge of the social world (Bruner 1990, as quoted by Cortazzi 1993: 1). When producing narratives, people are engaged in “a perceptual activity that organizes data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience” (Branigan 1992, as quoted by Cortazzi 1993: 1). Cortazzi (1993: 2) suggests that narrative analysis can offer revealing implications of the narrator as an individual and the surrounding culture. Riessman (1993: 1-2) emphasizes the fact that people produce narratives in specific contexts and try to organize their experiences within that framework, and this can be approached methodologically by looking at the structure of the narratives and the linguistic and cultural resources they utilize. Just as discourse analysis, narrative theory can be utilized effectively in the study of identity. As Riessman (1993: 2) states, “individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives”. It can be concluded that discourse analysis and narrative theory have a lot in common: they both acknowledge the importance of the individuals’ personal experiences and social environment in the process of their identity formation.

Gergen (2001: 249) offers an interesting viewpoint to the analysis of identity by stating that self-narratives are “cultural resources that serve such social purposes as self-identification, self-justification, self-criticism, and social solidification”. Riessman (1993: 11) makes an important point by saying that when telling about an experience, the narrator is “creating a self” on the basis of how one wants to be seen by the audience. Riessman (1993: 5) further states that narrative analysis gives the researcher the freedom to systematically interpret the narrator’s interpretations. Riessman (ibid.) continues that “the approach gives prominence to human agency and imagination”, and it is therefore very useful when looking at the concept of identity. In addition to revealing a great deal about the narrator itself, the narrative may also contain lots of cultural aspects that derive from the narrator’s own culture and social environment, and thus narratives form a rich source of information about the nature of identity with their large variety of references to the narrators’ cultural and social surroundings.



The aforementioned definitions of a narrative provide a valid justification for the data gathering method used in this study. When gathering the data, I asked the respondents to write narratives on the development of their identity as English-speaking Canadians. The task was accompanied by a text extract to give some indications on the kinds of things I wanted them to take into account during the writing process, but otherwise I asked them to reflect freely on their past experiences and the issues that have had an effect on the development of their identity. In these narratives, the respondents had freedom to write from a point of view of their choice, and as a result the data ended up consisting of a great variety of personal histories, drawing their influences from the individuals' personal experiences and the surrounding culture and society in general. As Gergen (2001: 248) has said, "our present identity is thus not a sudden and mysterious event but a sensible result of a life story". Narrative analysis forms a good combination with discourse analysis because they are both well suited for analysis of this kind of data; they pay attention to the same things on the data but still offer slightly different points of view, narrative analysis concentrating more on the narratives as such and discourse analysis taking the analysis to the next level by connecting the contents and linguistic features of the narratives to the wider social context. Concrete examples of how these analytical tools can be utilized in the data analysis will be introduced in the next section.

## **4.2 Practical Applicability of Discourse Analysis and Narrative Theory**

To take the idea of a discourse to a more practical level, Fairclough (2003: 129) has mapped out two complementary ways in which to identify different discourses within a text. One can analyse the text by identifying "the main parts of the world (including areas of social life) which are represented – the main 'themes'" and "the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented." In the context of my study, a central theme could be identified as e.g. being Canadian, and it could be seen from a number of different perspectives depending on the degree to which one has integrated bilingualism as a part of one's identity. According to

Fairclough (2003: 129), paying attention to the various features of vocabulary is an effective way to distinguish different discourses from one another because discourses use different wordings to present the world in varying ways. To make the analysis deeper, it pays off to take a closer look at the semantic relations of words as well, i.e. the “meaning relations between words and longer expressions, between elements of clauses, between clauses and between sentences, and over longer stretches of text (Allan 2001, Lyons 1997, as quoted by Fairclough 2003: 36). Since the main goal of this study is to analyse the narratives in order to map out the underlying and comprehensive themes and to draw conclusions on their importance to individual respondents, analysing their use of vocabulary will provide useful information on e.g. their attitudes, values, and opinions, and illustrating and categorizing their wording choices will form a basis for drawing analytical conclusions.

One important aspect of a text worth considering is the way in which it is written, i.e. its style. Fairclough (2003: 159) explains that “styles are the discoursal aspect of ways of being, identities” and they can therefore tell a great deal about the process of identification. This is a very interesting notion because identity is one of the main concepts of my study and the overall style of the narratives combined with the more precise linguistic choices will give valuable insights on the ways in which individual respondents reflect on their identities. Fairclough (2003: 160) further reminds about the social nature of the identity-building process and the distinction between social identity and personality. The respondents are likely to reflect e.g. on the national identity of Canada, and these kinds of factors are bound to have an effect on individual Canadians as well, thereby illustrating the importance of one’s social environment. This is an interesting aspect when mapping out the different themes and points of view presented in the narratives.

One noteworthy aspect of analysis is to study the way in which people are located in discourse. According to Moita-Lopes (2006: 295), *positioning* refers to the process of locating oneself in discourse or conversation. The things that an individual says direct him/her to position in a specific way within a narrative (Fairclough 1992: 43). In positioning, the relationship between the individual and the external influences is reciprocal. As research (e.g. Davies and Harré 1990, as quoted by De Fina, Schiffrin

and Bamberg 2006: 7) has shown, “historical, sociocultural forces in the form of dominant discourses or master narratives position speakers in their situated practices and construct who they are without their agentive involvement”. However, an individual can also actively position oneself and draw on various resources of one’s preference to do so. Indeed, narrative studies have shown that in addition to offering static information about the narrator as an individual, narratives also include various indications of active *performance* of identity, which contributes to the overall formation of identity within the narrative (Bamberg 1997b, as quoted by Georgakopoulou 2006: 83-84).

It should be noted, however, that the external influences are often present in the narratives as indications of the range of positions offered by the cultural context (Wortham & Gadsten 2006: 316). In addition to positioning oneself as an independent entity within a narrative, an individual can also claim identities as a member of various groups by drawing on a range of linguistic and stylistic choices, and one can also create multiple identities that can be varied depending on the circumstances (De Fina 2006: 352-353). Positioning acts as a highly applicable tool in data analysis because by paying attention to the ways in which an individual locates oneself in the context of one’s narrative and what kinds of resources are utilized, important aspects constituting an individual’s identity can be identified. This helps in determining the way in which English Canadians position themselves in relation to the events in the societal level and how they conversely act as active agents in creating meanings to themselves. This interplay reveals a great deal about the construction of identity and what is important in this process.

The vocabulary used in the narratives is a highly important aspect of this study, and there are various tools available when taking a closer look at the linguistic structures of narratives. In the context of discourse analysis, Martin and Rose (2007: 25-29) introduce the term **appraisal** to be used as a tool for evaluating the different kinds of **attitudes** present in texts, the strength of the feelings for expressing these attitudes, and the source or origin for a certain kind of attitude. Appraisal can be used for negotiating social relationships and indicating the way we feel about things and people. Martin and Rose (2007: 29-47) explain that when analyzing discourse, one

should firstly pay attention to the different ways in which **the affect** is manifested, i.e. whether the feelings people express are positive or negative, and whether they are expressed directly or indirectly. The same idea applies also when looking at the different kinds of **judgments** and **evaluations** present in the texts and their intensity. Secondly, attitudes are **gradable**, i.e. their expression is directly connected to the intensity of our feelings. Different levels of intensity can be expressed e.g. by using **intensifiers**, such as *extremely* or *rather*. Thereby a person positions one's feelings on an intensity scale that ranges from low to high grading. Intensity can also be expressed by using **attitudinal lexis**, i.e. descriptive words such as *delighted/elated* or metaphors and swearing, or **grammatical items** illustrating intensity, such as *some/numerous* and *have to/might*. A narrative is a fruitful type of text in this respect because, according to Martin and Rose (2007: 45), amplification is usually most visible in narratives when compared with e.g. administrative genres. Thirdly, one should pay attention to the source of attitudes. Martin and Rose (2007: 48-49) use the term **heterogloss** for referring to a source other than the writer and **monogloss** for referring to the writer as the source.

Just like discourse analysis, narrative theory pays close attention to the vocabulary used in the narratives. Cortazzi (1993: 53) uses the term **lexical signalling** for marking the semantic relations between clauses by using specific key words, thereby making the information structure of the narrative clearer. These key words can belong to various word classes, and the main point is to detect them in order to "identify the structural elements of narratives", such as evaluation. As Riessman (1993: 20) states, "in evaluation clauses, which typically permeate the narrative, a teller stands back from the unfolding action and tells how he or she has chosen to interpret it". As we have seen above, also discourse analysis utilizes the concept of evaluation in the analysis of narratives. Cortazzi (1993: 54) places the lexical signals under four headings: situation, problem, solution, and evaluation. **Situation** includes words describing the specific circumstance, time, place, and people. **Problem** includes words such as *drawback*, *concern*, *risk*, and *difficulty*. **Solution** contains words such as *answer*, *improvement*, *prevent*, and *develop*. **Evaluation** entails words such as *better*, *delighted*, *disappointed*, *happy*, and *develop*. When looking at narratives, one should pay special attention to the way in which the narrator connects

significant events together and how word choice and the structure of the narrative support this process: “the emphasis is on language – how people say what they do and who they are – and the narrative structures they employ to construct experience by telling about it” (Reissman 1993: 40).

The categorizations presented above are highly useful when analyzing the narratives written by the respondents because they provide some very practical tools for pointing out the significant aspects concerning the respondents’ use of vocabulary and other linguistic features and structures of the texts. Paying attention to, for example, the different attitudes expressed in the texts is highly important because attitudes are closely connected to the concept of identity and thereby their linguistic manifestations may reveal something significant with regard to the respondents’ personal views on identity and what it entails. The scope of these categorizations suffices for the purposes of this study because a highly detailed grammatical analysis of the narratives would not necessarily bring much extra value to the overall analysis, taking into account the fact that I aim at looking at the narratives more as entities, which do not necessarily have to be cut into the smallest possible pieces in order for them to provide me with the information I need about the linguistic construction of identity and the individual experiences of the respondents.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Research Questions**

The main question that is dealt with in this study is how English Canadians react to the question of bilingualism and what kind of effect it has on the formation of their identities. Another important question that relates closely to the main research question concerns the way the respondents see and evaluate themselves as bilingual and what kind of meaning bilingualism has to them. The way in which they make these evaluations and what they consider to be the basis for these evaluations is interesting to map out since the multifaceted nature of bilingualism as a phenomenon and the regional and societal factors in the Canadian society ensure that not everyone has the same kind of language proficiency. On a more general level, one major question serving as a basis for all these more specific language-oriented questions deals with the role which languages in general have on the respondents' identity formation, and what kinds of aspects are present when the respondents think about their language identity. These questions create a framework for determining the respondents' level of attachment to the languages they use and for making conclusions of their importance to the process of identity formation in the specific Canadian context.

The starting point for the underlying assumptions of these questions is that language is an essential part of building one's identity, and if the language issue is in disarray on the national level, it is bound to have an effect on personal identities of individual Canadians as well. As a great number of the previous studies have dealt with the national identity of Canada, it is rewarding to direct more interest towards the way in which individual English Canadians react to this identity issue and how the problematic language situation on the societal level influences the lives of these individuals. Previous research suggests that bilingualism has a significant effect on identity but it is particularly interesting to find out the level and intensity of the respondents' attachment to the languages they use and what kinds of attributes, evaluations and values they attach to them. One point of interest in this context is whether English Canadians view the Canadian bilingualism issue essentially

positively or negatively, given the overall situation with official multiculturalism and the presence of numerous languages in the Canadian society. Canada is the promised land of immigration and multiculturalism and therefore it might be possible that some people do not see the issue of bilingualism as a battle at all but rather as something that contributes to their country's unique character. In addition to the main research questions concerning language, it is important to address the question concerning the other key components of the English Canadian identity in this context; language is only one part of a person's identity, and therefore it is essential to ask what other aspects of their identities the respondents consider integral in order to get a comprehensive impression of the English Canadians' identities.

## **5.2 A General Description of Data and How It Was Collected**

In order to gather relevant data for my research, I planned a question form, which consists of seven background questions and a more comprehensive writing task. The question form is included as Appendix 1. The reason why I chose this method of collecting data was that, for the purposes of this specific study, it is integral to hear the opinions and thoughts of individual Canadians on the issues that are related to the research questions introduced above, and a question form with a set of questions and writing tasks seemed to serve that purpose well. As De Fina (2006: 352) states, "by telling stories, narrators are able not only to represent social worlds and to evaluate them, but also to establish themselves as members of particular groups through interactional, linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic choices". Discourse analysis and narrative analysis work really well as analysis methods with this kind of written data, and the analytical tools they provide help in mapping out the central themes and points of interest in the data, and also guide in the process of finding deeper meanings behind the things that are being written.

Since some of the respondents live all the way in Canada, sending a questionnaire via e-mail seemed to be the most practical and cost-efficient way of gathering data. The question forms were sent to the participants in May 2007. The question form was sent to 15 people living in different parts of Canada. I know some of the respondents

personally and they helped me to get in contact with other people who were interested in helping with my research and filling out the question form. Some of them also voluntarily forwarded my e-mail to some of their friends and relatives, so the data gathering process ended up having aspects of the so-called snowball method. Additionally, I sent the e-mail with the question form to the e-mail list of the international students in University of Jyväskylä in order to get in touch with Canadians who are currently studying or working in Jyväskylä. Some of the people who replied also forwarded my message to their friends and relatives so I do not have accurate information on how many people in total actually received my e-mail in the end. However, this method of gathering data proved to be rather successful since I received 20 responses in total and it is a sufficient amount of data for a study of this scale.

5 of the respondents are male and 15 are female. The age range of the respondents is from 19 to 57 years, the mean age being 26.9 years. The names of the respondents have been changed for anonymity reasons. Most of the participants live currently in British Columbia but many of them were born or have lived in other parts of Canada as well. I wanted to bring up this issue of region also in the questions since it is very likely that the intensity of the bilingualism issue and the way in which it is visible in people's surroundings varies a great deal in different parts of Canada. However, even though some attention is paid to the age and place of residence of the respondents, they cannot be used as a basis for making any general conclusions. The framework of a qualitative case study of this scale does not allow making any valid generalizations. The primary goal of this study is therefore to present detailed descriptions of the experiences, interpretations and viewpoints of a group of individual English Canadians concerning the interest areas covered by the research questions.

The question form consists of two different parts. In the first part, the background questions, I wanted to gather some general information about the respondents such as name, age and hometown, and I also wanted to find out about the participants' language skills and particularly about their skills in French and their school experiences with regard to learning French. As has been indicated in section 2.3, second language education is the most crucial channel for providing the Canadians



with French language skills, and therefore it is essential to have an understanding of their educational background. I also included some questions about the general role of the French language in the participants' lives and asked the participants to evaluate whether they consider themselves bilingual or not, and to give some indication on how they made this evaluation. These general questions provide some essential information about the participants. They help in placing the participants and their stories in a specific context within the Canadian framework, which is important to make sense of in order to make the analysis of their narratives provided in the second part valid. The information gathered from these background questions also provides valuable viewpoints on the way in which the respondents see and evaluate themselves as users of the French language and what kind of role and meaning it has in their lives.

In the second part of the question form I asked the participants to complete a more comprehensive writing task. The goal of the writing task was to get honest and thoughtful opinions and views about the way in which the participants perceive themselves as English Canadians and what kind of effect the bilingualism issue has on their identity formation. The purpose of the task was to motivate them to reflect on these issues from a wider perspective, taking into account their life experiences and maybe make some observations on how their identity has changed in the course of years, and what kind of significance linguistic issues have had on their identity formation. I also encouraged the participants to think about their identity in general and point out some of the other key components of their identity in case bilingualism is not of great significance to them personally. After all, it is rewarding to hear about other noteworthy aspects of their identity as well since even though the main focus of this study is on bilingualism and related language issues, it has become evident in the previous chapters that other notable features, e.g. multiculturalism, are prominent characteristics of the Canadian reality. Therefore some interesting conclusions can be made when these different aspects affecting the construction of identity come together as an entity. I wanted to give the participants freedom to reflect on these identity issues from various points of view and therefore the mode of writing was not restricted; they could write an essay, a poem or whatever they wanted. The reason for giving this freedom was to make the writing task an interesting and rewarding

experience and, as identity is something very personal, it seemed fair to let them explore the issue in a way most suitable for them. The writing task was accompanied by a text extract with a discussion about the Canadian identity and some questions, which were meant to give inspiration and some kind of starting point if one had problems with getting started.

### **5.3 Analytic Framework**

In Chapter 4, I gave a detailed introduction of the theoretical tools to be utilized in this study. The role of discourse analysis is crucial in the analysis because a discourse can be seen as representing some specific part of the surrounding world from a specific perspective, thereby drawing attention to the way in which the respondents deal with the various questions addressed in the question form. Discourses both reflect and create the individuals' worldviews, and for this reason it is of great importance to try to discern the central discourses in the respondents' narratives. Narrative analysis continues on the same path with discourse analysis by looking at the way in which people organize and make sense of their experiences and knowledge of the social world, and what kinds of linguistic and cultural resources they utilize in this process. For gaining an understanding of these issues in the context of the respondents' narratives, both analysis methods offer several tools that will be introduced next, accompanied by a more detailed introduction of the structure of the analysis.

Chapter 6, dedicated to the analysis of the data, is divided into three separate parts in accordance with the research questions. Some overlapping in handling the research questions in different sections occurs due to the multifaceted nature of the topics of interest in this study, but the general construction of the analysis chapter supports the logical handling of the research questions one by one. In the first part of the analysis, 'Bilingualism', the question of how English Canadians react to bilingualism and what kind of effect it has on identity formation will be looked at. This question will be answered by looking at the way in which the respondents define and evaluate themselves as bilingual and what kinds of functions the French and English

languages have for the respondents. The motivations and obstacles for learning French will also be discussed in this section. In order to make analytic observations about these issues, the analysis of the vocabulary used in the narratives is of central importance. Attitudes are gradable in nature, and therefore it is important to consider the intensity and strength of the feelings expressed. The respondents tended to use a lot of intensifiers, i.e. words amplifying meanings (e.g. *extremely*), when evaluating their French language skills, and they give strong indications of the role of the language for an individual. Other points of interest with regard to vocabulary are attitudinal expressions (descriptive words, metaphors, and swearing), grammatical items (e.g. quantifiers such as *some* or *numerous*, and verb forms indicating degree of obligation such as *have to* and *must*), and other lexical signals. Some aspects of positioning and discourses will also be looked at by studying what kinds of themes and perspectives come up in the narratives, and how the respondents position themselves relative to the external influences as well as the individual and dominant discourses. Conclusions about these issues can be made on the basis of the linguistic and cultural resources the respondents utilize in their narratives.

The research question concerning the overall nature of the respondents' linguistic identity will be looked at in the section 'Language Identity'. The discussion will be divided under several subheadings in accordance with the central themes that come up in the narratives. The purpose is to identify some central discourses that can be found in the narratives and to see what kinds of cultural and linguistic resources the respondents utilize in the process of forming their linguistic identity. In the last section, 'Being Canadian', the goal is to have a look at the other building blocks of the English-speaking Canadians' identities by pointing out the central discourses and cultural and social resources the respondents utilize in their narratives. The observations will be divided under subheadings in the same manner as in the previous section. The analysis of vocabulary introduced above will be of central importance in all sections. Each of these separate sections will be concluded with a short summary of the central findings in order to facilitate smooth transition to the next section.

## **6. CONCEPTIONS ON BILINGUALISM AND IDENTITY**

### **6.1 Bilingualism**

In this section, the goal is to describe how the respondents defined themselves as bilingual in their narratives and what kind of criteria they used for making these evaluations. The main functions of bilingualism are also looked at. Furthermore, I look into the main motivations and obstacles for becoming bilingual, what kind of effect these factors have had on the language acquisition process of the respondents, and what kinds of attitudes towards bilingualism and the French language are present in the narratives.

#### **6.1.1 Different Definitions for Being Bilingual and Its Functions**

All in all, only seven of the 20 English Canadians who replied to the questionnaire considered themselves French-English bilingual. One respondent considered himself “semi-bilingual”. Additionally, one respondent described herself as Chinese-English bilingual, thereby broadening the concept of bilingualism to include other languages as well. Some respondents also referred to other languages of their linguistic repertoire that they had been learning at school or at home but they were not discussed to any significant extent due to the nature of the questions on the questionnaire and the focus on the language set of French and English. All in all, 11 respondents mentioned English as the only language they know.

The respondents gave a rich range of definitions for what it means to be bilingual and what kinds of skills are needed for one to be able to call oneself bilingual. In other words, they tended to define bilingualism as a matter of skills and competence. Most of the respondents reported that their French language skills were due to their schooling. The respondents’ experiences regarding the learning of French varied a great deal, and both positive and negative feelings were expressed. Five of the respondents had attended French immersion for at least some time, and the rest of the respondents had all studied French to some extent. A general summary of the extent

of this schooling is difficult to give due to the wide range of different French education programs available in different provinces. However, most of the respondents described their knowledge of the French language acquired at school as rather basic no matter how many years they had studied it.

In the question form, the respondents were asked to evaluate their competence in French. The respondents' evaluations of their French language skills were marked by an extensive use of intensifiers, and this interestingly indicated the respondents' tendency to evaluate their skills on a self-made proficiency scale, ranging from very poor to entirely fluent. At the lower end of this proficiency scale, Julia, for example, describes her competence in French as "quite poor", and Josh states that he is "terrible" at French, continuing that he is "definitely not" a bilingual. All in all, it seems that the deciding factor is the capability to function 'effectively' and 'competently' in daily life using French, and many respondents lament missing this capability. This level of language proficiency seems to be marked by very limited functionality, as Emily and Michael, respectively, describe below (emphasis added).

(1) English is my mother tongue. I speak French, Finnish and Arabic but *none* of them *very well*. I only speak them to a *very basic* 'getting by' level... Considering that I have studied French for so many years in school (at least grade 4-10...), my French is *very poor*. (Emily)

(2) I don't consider myself bilingual, because my second language (french [sic]) skills are *very low*... Hypothetically if a francophone came up to me and started speaking, even if it's [sic] would be *fairly simple* questions, I *probably* would not understand and therefore that's why I don't consider myself bilingual. (Michael)

The respondents placing themselves around the middle of the proficiency scale seemed to be somewhat confident in their French language skills. Many respondents described their skills as 'moderate' or 'intermediate'. An interesting aspect is that some respondents defined themselves as bilingual and the others did not even though they made same kinds of linguistic choices to describe their skills. This stage of competence seemed to act as a somewhat indefinable middle ground, and a great deal

of fluctuation with regard to the level of language skills could be detected. This contrast is illustrated by Claire and Johanna, respectively (emphasis added).

(3) I would say that I *am able* to communicate in and understand French *fairly well*, but would not consider myself *fluent or bilingual*. (Claire)

(4) Yes I do consider myself bilingual, *even though* I *wish* I were *better* in French. I consider myself bilingual because I can understand French and can communicate *even if it is poorly*. (Johanna)

Benjamin makes an interesting compromise between these two extremes, drawing attention to the regress of his language proficiency and the level of various language abilities. When asked about whether he considers himself bilingual or not, he replied (emphasis added):

(5) Well, *semi-bilingual*. My French is *not what it used to be*. I can *get around* with French *though*. I have *enough* that I can understand the context of *most* French conversations, but *not enough* to speak *intellectually*. (Benjamin)

Being able to position oneself on this level of competence and to call oneself bilingual seemed to generally require the individual to possess sufficient language skills to survive in communicative situations in two different languages. Some respondents mentioned that their language skills had deteriorated somewhat with time but they still possessed adequate functional skills in French to manage most interactional situations.

In order to place themselves at the high end of the language proficiency scale, the respondents seemed to feel the need to be able to describe themselves as very good or fluent in French. In most cases, the fluency was the result of attending French immersion programs in school or having intense exposure to the language either at home or in a French-speaking area in Canada or abroad. Bonnie, having attended French immersion and studied French all the way to university, considered herself bilingual because she has been using both languages “since such a young age”.

Theresa described her school experiences as being integral in the process of becoming bilingual (emphasis added).

(6) Because of Bill 101 on the French language, I *had to* study in French schools *all the way up* to university, where I studied in English. Needless to say, because French was the teaching language, I became *fluent*. I am *still fluent*. (Theresa)

This level of bilingualism was generally marked by a great deal of fluctuation with regard to the vocabulary used to describe it, but the general tendency was to describe the use of French by using attitudinal lexis such as *comfortable* or *natural*, indicating a certain sense of ease with which one uses French. Even if an individual had reached this stage of language competence, the level of fluency was nevertheless described by the use of intensifiers such as *pretty* and *completely*. Anna-Maria mentioned talking both languages “on a daily basis” as a precondition for bilingualism. Grace elaborated this view by drawing attention to a balanced stage of bilingualism reached by an equal competence in both languages (emphasis added):

(7) I consider myself bilingual because I am *comfortable* conversing in *both* French and English *under different circumstances with different kinds of people*. I read *both* English and French *equally* – in terms of *quantity* and also in terms of the *ease* I read with. And although I am *loosing* [sic] some of my French writing skills (due to the fact that *now* I *mostly* write in English and Finnish) I am *still able* to *adequately* communicate through writing in *both* English and French. (Grace)

Another noteworthy aspect of fluency was that some respondents did not consider themselves bilingual because they felt they cannot use French as effectively as first language speakers. The aspect of job requirements was also mentioned. As Claire and Alice, respectively, note when asking whether they see themselves bilingual or not (emphasis added):

(8) No, because I don't believe I can communicate in French *close to the same level* as those who speak it *as a first language*. (Claire)

(9) No, I do not. I would not be *competent* to fill a job or a position that would require French as *its first language*. (Alice)

All in all, being able to describe oneself as fluent seemed to require relatively developed French language skills and the ability to tackle communicative situations with different people in various contexts. For the respondents considering themselves bilingual, French had usually gained an established role in the individuals' linguistic repertoire and served as an effective communicative tool.

At all levels of the language proficiency scale mapped out above, an important factor in evaluating oneself as bilingual seemed to be the estimation of different language abilities (reading, writing, speaking, listening) separately. Many respondents noted that they are more proficient, for example, in reading than in speaking. Colleen, for example, described her oral French as *very good* and written French as *poorer*. Alice gives an account of her abilities, marking different levels of proficiency by using grammatical items such as *some* and *to be able* as well as attitudinal lexis such as *basic*.

(10) I do not consider myself bilingual, but I would consider my competence in French as *basic*. I took French classes in school from grade 1 until grade 11. In that time I have gained basic conversational skills, and was *able* to accomplish *some* level of reading and writing in French. (Alice)

To sum up, the French language skills of the respondents varied a great deal from very poor and basic to completely fluent, indicated by a colourful range of descriptions. The criteria the respondents used for evaluating themselves bilingual were closely connected to questions of competence to tackle a variety of communicative situations and external requirements, such as language skill demands of specific job positions. It is noteworthy that the respondents had considerably different views on what it means to be bilingual and what kind of competence is required to be able to call oneself bilingual, ranging from basic conversational abilities to complete fluency.



### *Functions of Bilingualism*

Due to the schooling system of Canada, all respondents had had to study French at least to some extent, and therefore school was the most common context where the respondents had used the language. Depending on the French language program they had attended, some had been more exposed to the language than the others. The regionality issue and not having a chance to practice the language skills outside school was illustrated by Marissa (emphasis added):

(11) The *only* context that I have *had* to speak French is in school. This is *mainly* because I live in Alberta, which is a western and *primarily* English-speaking province. (Marissa)

Another aspect of the regionalism issue mentioned in the narratives was that the respondents had found their French language skills ‘useful’ when travelling to Quebec or France. Antti, for example, notes that in Vancouver, his hometown, there is “almost no requirement to use French in daily life”, but he has needed French when travelling to France for study and work purposes. Indeed, in addition to school and travelling, work was another important context for using French for some respondents. Johanna, for example, described her experiences of using French at her last workplace, having done customer service and used French about one fourth of each work day. Using French at work, however, was relatively rare; only a few of the respondents reported having used their French language skills for work purposes.

Many of the respondents had used French within their social networks. French was used with bilingual friends when French was considered a more ‘comfortable’ option, and many had friends in Quebec where French was usually the language of choice. Outside of Quebec, however, the use of French was usually not that common since the majority language is English. French was also mentioned as a ‘mediating’ element; Grace and her mother, both fluent in French, sometimes integrated French words into their conversations if Grace was “at loss for English words”. In bilingual households, the choice of language seems to be a matter of convenience and

preference. Colleen described the process of language choice within her family as an interplay of both languages (emphasis added):

(12) My husband is French. When we met in 1967 (when I was 17) he could *barely* speak English. My ‘school’ French was *better* than his, so we began our relationship in French and have continued speaking it. At home, I speak to my children in English, my husband speaks to them in French *the majority of the time*. (Colleen)

Many respondents who did not consider themselves very proficient in French lamented that due to their lack of functional French language skills, they had missed out on getting to know a lot of nice French-speaking people who did not speak much English. In these cases, the respondents expressed a sincere wish to have more adequate skills in French, and some, like Julia below (emphasis added), even considered knowing French their responsibility as Canadians.

(13) In my personal life, I have *only wished* that I had French as a language since I have arrived in Finland. I have met *several* French international students. A friend of mine recently married and will be bringing his wife to Finland soon. She however does not speak Finnish or English and *mainly* communicates in French. I am *ashamed* that as a Canadian I cannot do a bit more to communicate with her. *I really should be able to*. (Julia)

Within social networks, French sometimes seemed to serve a social function even for English Canadians who had limited French language skills. As Alice notes below:

(14) Other than school, I have *only* used French in *social contexts* with friends. This was, *however*, not a means of communication, but, *rather more reminiscing* some of the French words that we remembered. (Alice)

In this kind of situation, French seemed to act as a social bond rather than as a proper communicative tool in a functional sense. French was used to indicate shared experiences and something everyone has been through, and therefore a sense of collectiveness could be detected.

### 6.1.2 Motivations and Obstacles for Becoming Bilingual

In their narratives, the respondents discussed various reasons and motivations for becoming bilingual and maintaining their French language skills. For some respondents, learning French had been a natural outcome of their general interest in languages. Anna-Maria describes her positive learning experiences as something she really enjoyed (emphasis added):

(15) I took French up to my last year in high school. I *really enjoyed* learning French. *Many* people dropped French class when it became an *optional* course. I continued because I *like learning languages*. (Anna-Maria)

Many of the respondents tended to describe their experiences of learning French as *positive* and something they had *liked, enjoyed, or loved*, indicating a positive attitude towards learning the French language. This level of personal interest was usually accompanied by a tendency to travel to the French-speaking areas of Canada ‘regularly’. Furthermore, Johanna, for example, was voluntarily taking a French grammar course through university because she was “working hard not to forget” her French, thereby demonstrating intense personal involvement. Alice’s thoughts on her school experiences also indicate strong personal interest in learning French (emphasis added):

(16) I was *lucky enough* to be one year ahead before the school system cut off offering mandatory French classes. Therefore, my classmates and I took French from grade 1 to grade 9, which was part of the official curriculum. The students who came after were only required to take French from grade 1 to grade 7. The French I took in high school I chose as *electives*. (Alice)

Alice’s obvious appreciation of learning French is marked by the use of an attitudinal expression *lucky* and the fact that she has continued taking French voluntarily, thereby illustrating personal initiative and motivation. Several respondents also expressed their wish to improve their language skills, especially if they felt they were ‘out of practice’ in some area of competence, such as professional French, indicating

a genuine interest in the state of their language skills and a personal attachment to the language.

Another important motivation for maintaining adequate French language skills was the prospect of needing the language for work purposes at some point. Julia noted that the idea of French being ‘advantageous’ is often acknowledged by the parents as well who may choose to enrol their children in a French immersion program in the hope of providing them with more opportunities in the future. Several respondents pointed out that the jobs at the Government of Canada, for example, always require proficiency in French, and this fact acted as an effective motivator for those wanting to work there. Julia, not describing herself as bilingual, drew attention to the fact that often people realize the advantages of knowing French only after leaving school (emphasis added).

(17) Also, *more recently* in my *professional* life I have seen how *advantageous* French *can* be. Upon graduation with my Master’s degree in Librarianship, some of my friends moved on to *government jobs* at Legislative libraries, or with the *legal system*. I was not interested in this area of librarianship but it *troubled* me that that career path was *automatically barred* for me because I am not *fluent* in written and spoken French, a *prerequisite* for these kinds of jobs. (Julia)

Several of the respondents demonstrated having this kind of instrumental and rational view of the French language, seeing it as a key that may potentially open many doors at some point of their lives. John elaborates on this same issue when thinking about the development of his French language skills and possible work prospects (emphasis added):

(18) However... had I stayed with French *longer* or *maintained* my French into the future *employment and volunteer situations* would have presented. Some job postings *request/require* bilingualism in French and English; while these are growing in popularity (or it could just be my perception) not being bilingual has not *damaged* my career prospects, but I know it would have *increased* them if had been. (John)

It is therefore a known fact that being bilingual can be a decisive factor when applying for some specific kinds of jobs. In John's example, the critical nature of this issue was marked by the use of lexical signals such as *damaged* and *increased* when discussing the effect of not being proficient in French on his work prospects, the previous marking a problem and the latter a solution. In this kind of situation, the respondents, therefore, had to position themselves in relation to the requirements from an authoritative level and act accordingly on the basis of their own motivations and wishes.

As a contrast to the various positive factors enhancing the learning of French, the respondents mentioned several obstacles that had impeded the process of becoming bilingual and sometimes caused negative attitudes towards learning French. Some of the most significant problems mentioned were related to the school system. It was often mentioned that the French teaching the schools provided was usually very basic and not much progress in learning had occurred even though some respondents had studied French for years; as Michael notes, he felt that they "didn't progress" in what they learned during the 8 years of studying French at school. Based on the narratives, it seemed that the quality of teaching had varied a great deal in the schools the respondents had attended. Some respondents noted that after switching schools, especially from a French immersion school to an English school, their French language skills had deteriorated due to the different quality levels of the French programs offered and the exposure to the French language offered, marking these differences by using attitudinal lexis such as *sufficient/insufficient* and *useful*. Julia's account below sums up many of the obstacles for learning encountered in the school environment (emphasis added).

(19) French instruction was supposed to begin in grade four, but throughout elementary school I had teachers who were *not enthusiastic or capable* in their French language skills so *very little* French language learning occurred... I was educated in an inner-city area where [sic] *many* students spoke *other* languages, there were *few* French immersion schools, and *motivation* for learning French was *quite low*, I believe. Furthermore, *no one* I knew had *ever* met a French speaking person and the concept of travelling

to Quebec of [sic] France was *far beyond* the means and experiences of my peer group... Through out high school, French teachers *often* conducted the class in French, relied on *out dated* [sic] textbooks, used worksheets/audiotape sets to *fill a lot* of class time. French class was *generally* the *wildest most out of control* part of the day where you could *often* complete homework from your *other* classes. (Julia)

Outdated and inefficient teaching methods, a restless classroom environment, and a general lack of motivation seemed to naturally lead to negative learning experiences, and the French language skills tended to stay on a relatively low level. Michael noted that after choosing an optional French course and noticing that not that much new content was introduced and the course was not “that useful”, he ended up not taking any other French courses. In this case the lack of motivation could be a result of frustration due to negative experiences and poor learning results. Marissa reflects on her school career and draws attention to several important aspects affecting her progress in learning French (emphasis added):

(20) School learning experiences were *mixed*; I don't feel I learned *much* in primary school, despite having French classes for six years and I did not continue to study French past grade [sic], until high school, where I took more classes for two years. By the time I entered university, I was *expected* to have *a certain level of competency* and was *required* to study a language for my bachelor's degree, so I decided to study more French. That year of study was *quite intensive and stressful* because *I wasn't at the level that some of the other students were* (many took French Immersion from the time that they were children), so I felt that I was *at a major disadvantage*. I would like to learn French, but do not want to study in a university environment *again*... I do not feel *competent* as a French-speaker and am *disappointed* in this. I think that I would have *a much better grasp* of the language had my schools done a *better* job of teaching French. (Marissa)

In this extract, the negative feelings experienced are marked by attitudinal lexis such as *intensive*, *stressful*, and *disappointed*, and lexical signals indicating a problem such as *disadvantage*. Another obstacle for learning that was mentioned often was the fact that, especially in provinces where English is the majority language, the

respondents did not have any opportunities to practice their conversational skills with French speakers outside school, and as not much speaking was included in the classroom activities, the respondents' skills tended to deteriorate. Hannah elaborated on these issues, creating a sense of negativity by using attitudinal lexis such as *weak*, *beneficial*, and *difficult*, and a lexical signal *shortage* marking a problem (emphasis added).

(21) However, my teacher was not French (there is a *large shortage* of French teachers) and had a *fairly weak* understanding of French as well, so learning was *difficult*. I *never* had the opportunity to speak French outside class since there is not a French population where I lived, so I *never really* learned conversation French. Overall, I don't think my French classes were *beneficial* in teaching me French. (Hannah)

The fact of not having enough opportunities to practice their French language skills was discussed by several respondents, and differing viewpoints were brought up. Bonnie elaborated on various aspects of this issue that also other respondents noted (emphasis added):

(22) Living outside of Quebec, the French language is *not that visible*. It is *mandatory* to learn French in school (though not to the extent to which I studied it). However, the mandatory French which must be learned is *not that much*, and it is *often not even sufficient* to have a conversation with a native French speaker. The reality is that there is *no where [sic] to practice* the language outside of the classroom in the Rest of Canada, as French *simply is not* spoken there. As a result, *many* English-speaking Canadians *quickly lose* their knowledge of French after the age of 15, when learning French is *no longer* compulsory... French is *not visible much in everyday situations* that the *common* person would encounter... I would venture a guess and say that someone who didn't know that Canada was a bilingual country, would not know that is [sic] was if they came to visit a location outside of Quebec. (Bonnie)

As it can be seen in this extract, not being able to use French outside school is constructed as a noteworthy problem. This problem is described using numerous

negative expressions when describing that French is *not that visible* outside Quebec, the French learned in school is *not even sufficient* to have a chat with a native speaker, many people *quickly lose* their knowledge of French, and there is *nowhere* to practice French outside school. As these kinds of descriptions are by no means rare, one is led to conclude that bilingualism is for many an issue with no relevant connection to everyday life. If one is not able to utilize one's language skills in meaningful communication, it seems to be rather difficult to maintain one's skills. When asked how visible bilingualism is in the respondents' surroundings, many described the absence of French by stating that they have 'never' needed French outside school.

An intriguing, and somewhat contradictory, view on the absence of French was brought up by a few respondents. Emma illustrates this view by offering an alternative perspective (emphasis added):

(23) To be *honest* though, it's *too easy* to be an Anglophone. Unless you're a Canadian wanting a government job, or you live in Quebec, *it's pretty easy to get away with* being a monolingual. (Emma)

There are several important things to be noted here. Emma states that it is *too easy* for English-speaking Canadians to *get away* with not knowing French, thereby in a way shifting the responsibility on to the anglophones themselves and indicating that they should be doing more. Hannah emphasizes another important aspect of this view, mentioned by several other respondents as well:

(24) I have never had to use French. On only one occasion did I visit the province of Quebec (French province) and did I have to read a little bit in French and try to communicate a little (ie. [sic] Ordering at a restaurant). Even still, I didn't *need* French for that, I could have gotten by with English. (Hannah)

This extract shows that even if the respondent knows French, there is usually no real need to use it because one can lean on one's knowledge of English, the dominant language in Canada. It is important to notice the emphasis on the word *need* in the



extract: it is marked by Hannah herself, and being the only added emphasis in her narrative, it can be interpreted as an indication of something crucial. Indicating that one ‘can get by’ with English is also noteworthy because it reinforces the notion that often there is no real requirement to know French; one can survive by using only English. All in all, the verb *need* was mentioned overwhelmingly often, indicating that the French language did not have any significant role in numerous respondents’ everyday lives. As Hannah and Benjamin, respectively, sum up (emphasis added):

(25) Bilingualism in my area of Canada [Alberta] is *relatively rare*. Many people learn it in school and some may even do French immersion in school to become fluent, but it is *still predominantly* English speaking. There is *no need to know French unless your job calls for it* and the *only* time you see French is on certain products (ie. [*sic*] Cereal boxes). *Actually, many* people choose to learn *another second language besides French* in school or university... I am *only fluent* in English, but that is not to say I am *satisfied* with that, I *would love* to be bilingual, but where I live and with my career, I would *never* use it. (Hannah)

(26) Most places you can *get around* speaking English. In Canada, *even* most people from Quebec can speak English... *for the most part*, I haven’t *really needed* French. (Benjamin)

Personal motivation problems were also mentioned as impeding the process of gaining functional French language skills. Some of the respondents had had a positive attitude towards French in school but it had not been their “top priority”, and at the moment they were “out of practice” or possessed French language skills that were “quite rusty” or “eroded by time and neglect”. Josh illustrates a relatively negative attitude towards French, using attitudinal expressions such as *unimportant* and “having it forced upon me”:

(27) I viewed [French] as an unimportant subject while I was growing up in school. I was not good at it and I am the type of person who needs to at least understand the basics to push forward and in 15 or so years of having it forced upon me I was unable to get past the feminine and masculinity aspects

and therefore dropped it as soon as I was able to... I have never used French that I can recall. (Josh)

Some respondents acknowledged that their relatively low French language skills were a matter of confidence, and the situation could improve if they were 'forced' to speak more.

In this section about bilingualism, I have tried to give a comprehensive view of the respondents' French language skills and whether they define themselves as bilingual or not. Only seven of the 20 respondents defined themselves as French-English bilingual. The criteria the respondents used for making these evaluations varied considerably, thereby indicating a difficulty to define what being a bilingual fundamentally means. The respondents tended to describe their bilingualism in terms of competence, placing themselves along a self-made competence scale ranging from very poor French skills to complete fluency. The role the French language had gained in the everyday lives of the respondents varied greatly, being closely related to the place of residence and social contexts. School was the most common context where French was needed, along with work and social networks. Some respondents demonstrated a positive attitude and personal attachment to French, and this kind of attitude was usually accompanied by a relatively good level of proficiency in French. For some of the respondents, the motivation for learning French seemed to spring from external influences, such as work requirements, and in these cases the French language seemed to serve an instrumental and rational purpose. For some respondents, however, French seemed to be an issue of no relevant connection to everyday life. This kind of attitude was usually due to personal motivation problems, negative school experiences, or the fact that outside Quebec French is not that visible and there is nowhere to practice the language outside school. Nevertheless, many respondents demonstrated a wish to know French better, either for work purposes or driven by a sense of obligation as a Canadian.

## 6.2 Language Identity

Having mapped out the overall state of the respondents' bilingualism in the previous section, in this section I will try to gain a broader understanding of the respondents' linguistic identities. The purpose is to identify some central discourses that can be found in the narratives and to see what kinds of cultural and linguistic resources the respondents utilize in the process of forming their linguistic identities.

### *Torn between Two Languages/Cultures*

The problematic situation between Quebec and the rest of Canada seemed to have a significant effect on the way in which many respondents constructed themselves as Canadians, and languages had a crucial role in this process. Theresa gives an insightful account of her experiences of being placed between two different languages and cultures (emphasis added).

(28) I think there is no better place to experience *the clash* between French and English than in Montreal, Quebec. And I think there was no better time to experience it than during the 1995 referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec. We were 12 years old back then and we didn't quite understand what this meant, but *what we knew was that we had to pick*: you were either on the 'yes' side or on the 'no' side. What this really meant was whether you were French-speaking or English-speaking, or rather, *which language and which culture you most associated with*. I was on the 'no' side and the 'yes' was bad. We were for Canada, they were not. We had maple leaves, they had fleur de lys. *We were English, they were French...* Ultimately, I got over all of this. I used French when it was *more convenient* and English when it was more convenient. I realized that the more languages one knows, the more *freedom* one has. Yet in Quebec, *language is not a matter of freedom or common sense*. It is *still* a matter of *politics*. I speak both languages and I don't do politics... *Yet I still wish* that I could go to that '*other Canada*', far away from here, so that I could find out what it's like to be an English Canadian. *I want to know what it's like to not have to pick whether you're first a Canadian or a Quebecker.* (Theresa)

Strong external influences can be detected here. Theresa starts her discussion by describing the dynamic between the French and English as a *clash*, thereby indicating the negative nature of the entire setting. Theresa draws attention to the political discourse of a specific time, and in this situation she has been placed within strong external forces, marked by notions such as “what we knew was that we had to pick” and “language is not a matter of common sense or freedom”. What is at work in this context is a strong polarization between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and individuals have been forced to choose and to identify with one side or the other. Notably strong external influences have been (and are still) present and these forces limit the variety of positions one can adopt in this specific setting. As Theresa mentions, they had to pick “which language and which culture you most associated with”. Theresa has positioned herself on the English side, but she has clearly found a functional way to deal with the situation of navigating within two languages and cultures that are present in her surroundings. As she notes, knowing both English and French provided her with a convenient language repertoire she could utilize depending on the situation. She was also able to distance herself somewhat from the dominant political context and discourse, marked by her notion “I speak both languages and I don’t do politics”. Nevertheless, she tends to speak in rather political terms. The relative scarcity of individual freedom dictated by the official forces has led to feelings of frustration. This is marked by Theresa’s statement of wanting to go to the “other Canada” where she would not have to pick her side, thereby indicating to the division of the Canadian society. All in all, it seems that in this kind of situation one is placed in the middle of competing forces, and one has to balance constantly between one’s own preferences and the demands of one’s surroundings.

### *Being English Canadian*

The discussion above highlights the intense negotiation between competing forces that Theresa has had to face when identifying herself as English Canadian. The Quebec context seems to be highly challenging because it is the place where the tense relationship of the two languages is most visible, and people are forced to choose which language and culture they associate mostly strongly with. However,

respondents from other parts of Canada reflected on the notion of being English Canadian as well. It should be noted here that English Canadian is a term used by Harry Hiller to refer to the Canadians who speak English as their first language. This term was used in the text extract in the question form (see Appendix 1). The respondents were able to choose whether they used this text extract as a starting point for their narrative or not. Some of them referred to it in their narratives and it led to some thought-provoking insights about what it means to be an English Canadian, discussed in more detail below.

All in all, it seemed that many respondents did not define their identity in terms of being English Canadian. When asked to describe their identity as English Canadian, John, Julia, and Emma, respectively, replied (emphasis added):

(29) With respect to my identity as an “English-Canadian” I would have to say I don’t give it *much* thought. My identity is based *more* on shared hardships, climate, and values than [*sic*] language. (John)

(30) I don’t think Canadians think of themselves as English Canadians. *We simply* view ourselves as Canadians. (Julia)

(31) I’m Canadian. *That’s it.* (Emma)

On the basis of these viewpoints, it seems that the term ‘English Canadian’ is somewhat artificial and did not have any special role in the process of identity formation of the respondents. It could be detected that the respondents had not given this notion much thought earlier, some of them, like John, stating this directly and the others using expressions such as *simply*. They seemed to oppose the use of any labels that divide Canadians into different groups, many respondents emphasizing the fact that they are first and foremost ‘Canadian’. Often this attachment to being ‘simply’ Canadian derived from one’s family history; as Julia notes, she is an eighth generation Canadian but she has “such varied roots” and “such a vague family history” that her family tends to identify most strongly with being Canadian. In this process, language seems to be of relatively small importance, other things such as shared hardships and values gaining more attention.

Alice takes a slightly different approach to the idea of being English Canadian (emphasis added):

(32) To speak for myself, I do not consider myself an English Canadian. I *do* identify myself as Canadian for the *simple* reason as to identify myself from a *particular* place in the world. I consider my identity, to keep it short, following the work of Nikolas Rose. His analysis to identity is what he calls as the ‘genealogy of subjectification’, which follows the work of Foucault. I consider my identity to arise from and through a *multiplicity* of interactions, techniques, and domains that have *historically* linked ‘the self’ to *greater* social objectives, and where language plays a *small* part in these processes.  
(Alice)

Based on Alice’s account, the notion of being English Canadian is of very little importance to her, and calling herself Canadian ‘simply’ helps her to position herself geographically. Alice seems to distance herself from the entire notion of nationality, opting for a more philosophical approach. However, it should be noted that there are strong references to various cultural resources in Alice’s account and she leans on an authority in the process of forming her identity. She describes this process as ‘the self being linked historically to greater social objectives’. *Historical* and *social* are especially noteworthy here because they indicate that even though language has only a ‘small’ part in the overall process, the formation of identity is still dictated by the social context to at least some degree, and therefore the specific Canadian context and the languages in it have inevitably affected this process. The “genealogy of subjectification” seems to include an aspect of positioning with regard to greater social forces that have developed with time, and therefore the questions of nationality and language, in this case being Canadian and speaking English, can be concluded to be present because they are an inseparable part of one’s surroundings. It should also be noted that the scientific approach Alice uses indicates a high level of education, and this clearly affects the way she relates to her surroundings.

*Emotional Attachment to Languages and What They Represent*

As became evident above, some of the respondents do not tend to see themselves as English Canadian but rather simply Canadian. As English is the majority language in Canada and most of the respondents use it as their first language, it seems that the role of that language in their everyday lives is something they take for granted and do not think about that much. However, some respondents acknowledged the fact that even though they may not consider language an integral part of their identity, it may nevertheless have some special meaning to them. As Marissa and Johanna, respectively, explain below (emphasis added):

(33) When I think about my ethnic identity, I don't *usually* associate the fact that I speak English as *something* that is a *major* part of my identity. The fact that Canada is a bilingual country is *something I love* about living in this country, but I don't feel as though the English-speaking communities of Canada have *embraced* this fact *enough*. (Marissa)

(34) Speaking French for me is *part* of being Canadian. My grandmother's parents were from France. My mother lived in France for a couple years and wanted me to do the same. As a result she signed me up for French school as well as my two sisters when we were *very young*. I have *always wanted* to work in Politics and *knew that to do so I must speak French*. (Johanna)

Marissa explains that English does not form a *major* part of her identity, but the significance of the two official languages of Canada becomes evident by her choice of emotive verb when she considers the country as a whole, indicated by the way she *loves* the existence of bilingualism. Some concern for the languages can also be detected in her account when she states that the English-speaking communities have not *embraced* bilingualism enough. This kind of attitude reflects an emotional attachment to the languages in one's surroundings; even though the individual might not consider languages to be an important part of one's identity as such, they can still act as a source of pride. The role that specific languages gain in one's life is usually closely connected to one's family history, as becomes evident from Johanna's account. Her family background and traditions have led her to adopt the French

language and for her speaking French is “part of being Canadian”, the language therefore constituting an essential part of her identity. In her case, the attachment to the French language has been intensified by her determination, marked by having “always wanted”, to pursue a career in politics where French is a requirement.

Language can act as a strong point of identification and a device that connects an individual to one’s roots. Julia gives an insightful account of her relationship to language (emphasis added):

(35) I don’t think about language in terms of my identity *very often*. I miss my country for the vastness and freedom of choice. I think about my identity as a Canadian when I hear *stories* of my father’s childhood in Northern B.C., playing hockey in Dawson’s Creek, my grandfather’s stories of working on the Trans-Canada Highway... *Stories bind me to my homeland and make me proud*. Whatever brought one’s ancestors to this land, there is *a sense of pride* in a family history that involves ancestors willing to venture into the unknown, travelling a perilous journey in search of a better life. Language is *certainly a part* of this and I think *many* in my generation *wish* they had *not lost* the language of previous generations, whatever it may be... and *usually* it is *not* French. (Julia)

Julia brings up several interesting points. She states that language as an aspect of her identity is something she rarely thinks about, but as it becomes evident from her account, language is an integral part of being Canadian for her. She claims directly that language is “certainly a part” of one’s family history, and statements such as “stories bind me to my homeland and make me proud” indicate a strong attachment to one’s language(s), in this case it being English but it could be some other language as well. The *stories* Julia mentions are interesting in linguistic terms because in this case they are the medium for transmitting the information that makes her proud of her family history. Stories offer a chance to identify with one’s past and the broader social context, and therefore an emotional attachment to the languages of ancestors can be detected in Julia’s account. The things that have happened in the past dictate to some extent how one can position oneself now, and therefore a discourse of ethnic roots and heritage seems to be important in this context.



### *Language as a Blocking/Connecting Element*

Some respondents noted that not knowing a particular language may act as a blocking element in everyday life as it determines the extent to which one can function effectively in one's surroundings. Julia elaborates on this issue as follows (emphasis added):

(36) Languages play a *greater* role in my life, now that I live in Finland!... Language *determines* what movies I can watch, whether I can enjoy a play or a concert, partake in religious services, what books, magazines and papers I can access, who I can talk to, and how I navigate my physical environment. *For the first time in my life*, I understand how *essential* language is to experiencing the world or even just the local community... In my current home life, my boyfriend speaks some Finnish. His parents and relatives speak Finnish at family gatherings and *sometimes I find myself in the dark!* I have *always felt a little left out*, growing up *without another language or separate culture* at home like *many* of my peers. (Julia)

Julia compares her contemporary situation to the one in Canada, stating that she has only realized the *essential* role of languages after moving to Finland, and languages have a *greater* importance to her now. Having lived in an English-speaking community in Canada, a foreign environment where the dominant role of English cannot be taken for granted has forced her to re-position herself according to the demands and restrictions of her environment. Julia's comment about having "always felt a little left out" is particularly interesting because she clearly indicates having been in a disadvantageous position relative to her peers because she has grown up "without another language or separate culture at home". In a multicultural society like Canada, it is very common for people to know several languages and cultural traditions due to their diverse backgrounds, and not having experienced this diversity in her own home life seems to bother Julia and provoke feelings of being left out.

If language can act as a blocking element, it surely can also be an element that connects people and helps to create a sense of collectiveness. Claire elaborates on

this viewpoint, making a strong reference to the specific Canadian context (emphasis added):

(37) *I think our identity as Canadians could be less exclusive and more inclusive. Because of where I live in Canada, on the west coast, I think, speak, read, and write in English the majority of the time. I understand though, that excluding the learning of French from my studies or practises would be disrespectful to the country as a whole. I agree that language is what connects us as Canadians, however it doesn't need to be the only thing that forms our identity. It is great and essential for us to have a common way of communicating, and it doesn't make sense that two people who live in the same country might not be able to communicate with eachother [sic] verbally. Therefore, a basic understanding of our two official languages would be ideal for Canadians, though we should be able and allowed to communicate in other languages as well as long as it [sic] is not to the exclusion of others. (Claire)*

Several things are worth noting here. Claire states that even though English is her 1st language, she feels that not learning French would be “disrespectful to the country as a whole”. The way she alternates between using I and we, such as in “I think our identity as Canadians”, is interesting: her individual voice can be heard but she tends to lean on the collective side of ‘us’ for support. Claire states that language is one of the main elements that *connects* them as Canadians, and she seems to promote diversity of languages strongly, using attitudinal lexis such as *great*, *essential*, and *ideal*. Acceptance of diversity and acting accordingly seems to be of central importance, indicated by a wish to “be able and allowed” to use also languages other than the two official ones, and by the use of *exclusion*, a lexical signal indicating a problem. “To be allowed” in this context seems to indicate that the use of various languages is dictated by official forces, and this compels the individuals to position themselves accordingly, thereby reducing the alternatives available to them in a specific context. Within this framework, however, the ability to communicate and function effectively as a collective seems to be of great importance to several respondents.

*Broadening of Awareness and Perspective, and Practical Value of Knowing Several Languages*

As it has been noted above, one's environment, for example, can set various demands and restrictions to one's language use and thereby influences the way in which one evaluates the importance of languages to one's identity. In this kind of setting language is often seen as a functional tool which serves as a means to a specific end. Some respondents, however, offered some insights on how languages can have a more profound meaning to one's identity. Anna-Maria, Emma, and Grace, respectively, draw attention to the functional side of languages but also take their discussion a bit further (emphasis added):

(38) Language is an *important* factor in my life. I *love* learning languages and I *need* to know *at least* two to communicate with my friends and family. (Anna-Maria)

(39) I'm learning *more* languages *now than* I did in Canada. French was *always the main one* because it was a *must*. Having French under my belt *now though definitely helps* with the Spanish and even the Finnish. Languages are *important* because it *opens your eyes a bit more to other cultures*. (Emma)

(40) Languages are *an extremely important source of intellectual stimulation* in my life. For the past 5 years I have been using three different languages *on a daily basis*. The *different* vocabulary, word origin and sentence structure is *essential* to my *profession* as well as to my *mental wellbeing* because they *provide creativity to the routine*... I think it would be *beneficial for everyone* to have *some functional knowledge of at least two languages*. In a country where *so many* come from *different cultural backgrounds*, it is *especially important* to be able to "*think outside of the box*". Different languages offer *alternative* ways of approaching a question and *could lead to a better understanding between people* – or *at least in theory*. (Grace)

These respondents draw attention to the practical value of knowing several languages, both in leading their everyday lives in a multicultural environment and in learning other languages. Knowing several languages is clearly highly valued, indicated by positive attitudinal expressions such as *important, love, essential, and beneficial*. Expressions such as “opens your eyes a bit more to other cultures”, “an extremely important source of intellectual stimulation”, “provide creativity to the routine”, and “think outside of the box” indicate an immense appreciation towards the enriching nature of language in broadening of awareness and perspective. Grace stressed the potential knowing other languages has in creating better understanding between people, and many respondents seemed to consider this aspect in the Canadian context.

Colleen offers an interesting viewpoint on this issue by giving an account of her experiences of living in both the English and French cultures (emphasis added):

(41) Language plays a *large* role in my everyday life and I *switch back and forth* from English to French *constantly*. I speak English to my sons and French to my husband. I speak English to my sister and parents and English-speaking friends. I speak French to my French-speaking friends... In public, (shopkeepers, etc.) I speak both languages *equally*... Bilingualism plays a *big role* in my life as I live in *both* worlds. I feel *fortunate* to do so and *enjoy* having *such a comfortable place in both cultures*, i.e. the English culture in “English” Canada, and the francophone culture in Quebec (as well as in France). Having incorporate [sic] French culture into my life (through language and exposure to francophones in Quebec and Europe) has *greatly enhanced my life*. When I started speaking French on a regular basis (at 17) *my world view changed*. Over the years I saw and experienced *the difference in the ways anglos and francophones interact, socialize, speak. The more introverted, restrained, rational way of the anglos... as opposed to the more extroverted, emotional, dynamic way of the francophones. I found (and find) it fascinating. I am somewhat aware of how my personality changes somewhat when I switch from one language to the other*. As I said before, *I feel fortunate to have both*. (Colleen)

Colleen clearly appreciates her experience of living in two different worlds, indicated by expressions such as *fortunate*, *enjoy*, *comfortable*, and *enhance*. Living in a bilingual family and community means switching back and forth between French and English continuously, and due to the experience of learning French and adopting the French culture her “world view changed”. Colleen indeed makes it clear that, based on her own experiences, the French and English cultures in Canada differ from one another, indicated by the use of attitudinal lexis such as *introverted*, *restrained*, and *rational* to describe the English-speaking Canadians, and *extroverted*, *emotional*, and *dynamic* to describe the French-speaking Canadians. Colleen even states that her “personality changes somewhat” when she switches from one language to the other, and this indicates a tremendous effect of languages on one’s identity. It seems that in this kind of situation where an individual enjoys having intense exposure to two languages and cultures and notes this as having an effect on one’s personality, the negotiation of identity with regard to the multiplicity of external influences in the form of two different cultures and languages is a challenging but *fascinating* experience, and it could be that an individual possesses multiple identities, which are conveniently activated depending on the situation.

To sum up, this section on language identity has revealed several important aspects of the language identities of the respondents. The intense relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada seemed to have a disturbing effect on the identity formation of a number of the respondents. In this context, being placed in the crossfire of strong external influences impeded the process of positioning oneself, and finding a convenient middle ground between two different languages and cultures was a challenging task. However, the respondents seemed to appreciate bilingualism and the French language as essential parts of being Canadian and of the Canadian society in general. An interesting contradiction was visible in the way in which several respondents indicated being proud of the fact that Canada is a bilingual country and the sense of collectiveness it awakens, but then again the role of the languages themselves did not seem to be that important. Speaking English was often seen as a matter of convenience and a thing that was taken for granted, and as French was not that visible in the surroundings of most of the respondents, it did not have a proper chance to establish its position as an integral part of the respondents’

identities. The respondents who felt a profound connection to the French language usually reported it being due to their family background or life goals related to work and the like, and in these cases language seemed to act as a significant point of attachment and a link to one's roots. The enriching nature of language with regard to broadening of perspective and awareness was also acknowledged by several respondents. As a concluding note about this issue, it was through-provoking to notice the tendency of the respondents to oppose the traditional labels of English Canadian and French Canadian. It seemed that the notion of being English Canadian was regarded as artificial, and the respondents generally emphasized being first and foremost Canadian. For them, shared values and hardships, among other things, were a more crucial basis on which to build a sense of collectiveness.

### **6.3 Being Canadian**

In the previous section, various views on the role of languages in the respondents' identities were mapped out. Even though languages seemed to form an essential part of identity for some of the respondents, many pointed out that languages as such do not have an integral role when they think about their identity. In this section the goal is to have a look at the other building blocks of the English-speaking Canadians' identities by pointing out the central discourses and cultural and social resources the respondents utilize in their narratives.

#### *Tension between Quebec and the Rest of Canada*

The problematic situation between Quebec and the rest of Canada was mentioned by most of the respondents when thinking about their identity as English-speaking Canadians. Even though most of the respondents lived far away from Quebec and did not necessarily experience the clash between the two languages on a daily basis, this topic provoked some controversial opinions. The situation between Quebec and the rest of Canada has been rather heated for a long time, and this issue seemed to provoke feelings of frustration in some of the respondents, as can be noted in Kelly's account (emphasis added):

(42) Another, *everlasting* issue has been the allegation of Quebec *separatism* from Canada for decades. In 1995, the referendum of whether Quebec should separate from Canada solidified that allegation. Though Quebec had voted to stay, by the narrowest of margins, the referendum *provoked* questions of Canadian identity *in general*. (Kelly)

The use of the attitudinal expression *everlasting* seems to indicate frustration in this context. Kelly's account also highlights the fact that Quebec's ultimate goal of separating from Canada has caused uncertainty with regard to the nature of the Canadian identity in general. Josh pointed out that "we definitely do not have that same sense of affiliation" when comparing the English-speaking Canadians to the French-speaking Canadians; indeed, many respondents tended to compare the English and French speakers, thereby intensifying the feeling of division. As the issue of separatism has been dealt with on a national level by means of referendums, individual Canadians have had to choose their side and thereby position themselves with regard to the two languages and cultures, the positions available being dictated by the official forces. The political discourse is strongly present in this process, as Bonnie notes (emphasis added):

(43) ... Canada is *quite obviously broken into two parts*, French Canada and the rest of Canada. I feel that the *main* issue that this causes is *political*, and for my part at least, is *not an issue in everyday life*. (Bonnie)

The 'political' aspect is worth highlighting, but it is interesting to notice that, like Bonnie, many respondents seemed to distance themselves from the entire issue by making statements of it not being "an issue of everyday life". This feeling of distance was intensified for many by the fact that they lived relatively far away from Quebec and they did not necessarily have a personal attachment to this issue as such. In this kind of setting where the individual does not personally experience the relationship between the two languages and cultures, media acquires a central role in transmitting information about various events concerning this issue and in shaping attitudes. Hannah and Marissa, respectively, elaborate on the media and other things that have

had an effect on the way in which they have formed an impression of the events in Quebec (emphasis added) as follows:

(44) The impression I have gained through the *media* and *the separatist ideals of many Quebecois* is that they are *very patriotic* towards Quebec and feel *more strongly* that they are *first* Quebecois and *second* 'Canadian'. There is also the notion that the French are *bitter* towards English speakers and *many* English speakers (*especially* in Western Canada it seems, where French is *rare*) are *bitter* towards the French. Statements like "if they want to separate, let them separate, we don't need them" are *unfortunately common*. (Hannah)

(45) When I watch *the news*, there is *often some kind of debate* about Quebec and its identity as a sovereign state. *Growing up*, there have been *many political debates* about whether Quebec should continue to be a part of Canada. *These are the times* that I think *most* about the relationship between French and English Canadians. (Marissa)

In both examples, the media is referred to as a source of information, and the respondents have for the most part constructed their impression of the situation concerning Quebec based on the news they have heard about it. It is noteworthy to consider the importance of media in offering certain positions to individuals. The respondents seem to lean on other social resources as well, indicated by the way in which they refer to things other people have said and what they have learned while growing up. In this case, numerous external resources seem to be utilized as reference but, as Marissa mentions, "these are the times that I think most about the relationship between French and English Canadians", and in that sense the media, for example, has an important role in maintaining awareness about this issue which might otherwise be forgotten without any actual exposure to it in everyday life.

Based on the respondents' accounts, the frustration and indifference some of them felt towards the Quebec issue were accompanied by feelings of sympathy expressed by some respondents. John illustrates his own feelings concerning this topic (emphasis added):



(46) However, my instinctual [*sic*] perception of Québec has long been of *arrogance* and *demanding*. I have studied their history and *empathize* and *admire* their culture. That being said THEIR perceptions of Canada are *difference* [*sic*] from mine. I see 10 provinces (and 3 territories) they see 2 nations. However, when I stop myself from knee twitch thoughts I remember their history and *my mood changes...* I would suggest the ‘condition’ in Québec or in Canada has *more* to do with *perceptions* and *ignorance* than [*sic*] *truth* and *experience*. Sometimes the *frustrated* voice will say “let them separate”, but I’m *curious* to know if they’ve *ever* visited the area, or are they just *eager* for a *new* topic in the news. (John)

John seems to have a mixed attitude towards Quebec and a problem of positioning himself relative to this other group, indicated by the use of negative expression such as *arrogance* and *demanding* when describing Quebec and its endeavours, and, as a contrast, positive expressions such as *empathize* and *admire* when describing the Quebec culture. John’s own viewpoints seem to differ from the general attitude in Quebec, marked by statements such as “I see 10 provinces (and 3 territories) they see 2 nations”, but being familiar with Quebec’s history, he manages to maintain a relatively understanding attitude towards the feelings a lot of people in Quebec share. John seems to suggest that the ‘condition’ in Quebec and Canada could be seen as a sort of an attitude problem, utilizing the contrast created by negative expressions *perceptions* and *ignorance* and positive expressions *truth* and *experience*. Based on these comments, it seems that John’s attitude could be described as semi-understanding, him being able to see both sides of the coin but still being rather critical towards the issue. A few respondents illustrated a similar kind of attitude but with even a more positive edge. As Grace explains below (emphasis added):

(47) For some people, like myself how [*sic*] *relate* to the French language and/or have other *European ties*, it is probably *reassuring* to have *at least part* of the country *claiming a particular identity* – that part of Canada holds a place in the history. Today I have the impression that many Anglophone Canadians have *bonded more* with their *southern neighbour* than with the eastern provinces (*awed resentment to an older sibling*). (Grace)

Grace seems to feel positively about the way in which Quebec promotes its own cause, indicated by the use of an attitudinal expression of *reassuring* and statements such as “that part of Canada holds a place in the history”. Her own personal attachment to the French language and culture surely affects her attitude, and the way she refers to many English-speaking Canadians having “bonded more with their southern neighbour” seems to imply that English Canadians themselves could also do something differently.

Some of the respondents seemed to promote a certain sense of equality when it comes to the relationship between Quebec and other parts of Canada. This is illustrated in the accounts of Colleen, Benjamin, and Emma, respectively (emphasis added):

(48) I think of Canada and then Quebec as a province within Canada that has a *very strong unique identity*. *I don't break it up into 2 parts*, but rather conceive of the country *as a whole*. (Colleen)

(49) They [Quebec] are a *unique culture* within Canada. This does not make them a *distinct* nation within Canada, but *only* a culture. Remember, Canada is multi-cultural. Canada *embraces* the concept of *multiculturalism* and often refers to itself as *a cultural mosaic*. (Benjamin)

(50) The Quebeckers have a *strong* heritage and I think that's a *good* thing but they're *not the only ones*. It's *normal* that they want to *stick together*, but *same* goes for *most other "minorities"* in Canada. We're a melting pot and I *like* that. (Emma)

Based on these accounts, it seems that these respondents accept the fact that Quebec has a distinct culture and are therefore a unique group within Canada, indicated by statements such as “the Quebeckers have a strong heritage and I think it's a good thing” and “it's normal that they want to stick together”. However, at the same time they emphasize the fact that even though Quebeckers are distinct in their own way, they should nevertheless be on the same line with other cultural and linguistic groups in Canada, and being distinct is not an adequate justification for declaring themselves

a separate nation. The respondents emphasize this by stating that “this does not make them a distinct nation within Canada, but only a culture” and “I don’t break it up into 2 parts but rather conceive of the country as a whole”. The official policy of multiculturalism is used as a solid basis for the equality being promoted by the respondents, and the policy is clearly appreciated, indicated by the use of verbs such as *embrace* and *like*. It should be noted though that, being an official policy on a national level, multiculturalism can be seen as an authoritative discourse in itself because it dictates the official guidelines for the co-existence of different cultural and linguistic groups in Canada, and as individual Canadians adopt this guideline, it can be seen as a discourse that both creates and reflects the individuals’ worldviews and affects the way in which individuals locate themselves. Benjamin and Emma’s accounts reflect the shaping effect of this discourse.

As it has been noted above, the question concerning Quebec provokes both negative and positive comments, and the respondents differed with regard to how much importance they placed on the issue. To further highlight the complexity of the issue, Colleen’s account gives a vivid idea of the process a number of individual Canadians are likely to go through (emphasis added):

(51) I feel bilingualism is overplayed. I don’t understand the intensity around this issue. I think we should all be bilingual (learn both languages in school) and that’s it. I feel Quebec’s vigilant (at times aggressive) attitude towards safeguarding French is excessive. I don’t place that much importance on the issue itself... In Quebec in general there are tremendous conflicts. The francophones desperately trying to impose and hold onto French; and the Anglophones resenting their inferior position. Inferious [sic] because today many anglos cannot find jobs due to their poor French (whereas the case is less true for francophones)... The bulk of the tension seems to exist in areas where people aren’t bilingual. The francophones live in fear of the invasion of the anglos. The anglos live in resentment and fear that their numbers will be further reduced and along with that reduction, their rights and status will suffer... Because I am in the majority within Canada (and because I am bilingual) I feel very comfortable as an English Canadian (who speaks French fluently). Living in Montreal, however, I am within a minority. I can relate to the frustration, anger anglos feel regarding the

language issue. I don't understand though why they simply don't perfect their French so that they can fully function and participate in Montreal's bilingualism... get the best of both worlds. Having said that, I can't relate to the fanatic vigilance some francophones demonstrate in their desire to keep Quebec French. I'm all for both groups embracing both cultures, languages and identities [sic]... and enjoying life. (Colleen)

The wide range of intensifiers and attitudinal lexis Colleen uses indicates strong feelings towards this issue. The description of the situation is full of negative vocabulary such as *overplay*, *intensity*, *aggressive*, *invasion*, *excessive*, *conflict*, *desperately*, *resenting*, *inferiour*, *tension*, *fear*, *frustration*, and *suffer*. These are used to describe the feelings of both the English speakers and the French speakers, and they create a sense of extremely negative intensity around the issue. Colleen states that she is "very comfortable as an English Canadian" who also speaks French, and she expresses her understanding and sympathy towards both groups. However, her account indicates that the best solution to the problem would be a certain kind of equality, indicated by statements such as "we should all be bilingual and that's it" and "I'm all for both groups embracing both cultures, languages and identities [sic]". It seems that there is no easy way out of the problematic situation, and these kinds of developments on the national level place individual Canadians between strong opposing forces, and the question of positioning oneself becomes highly challenging.

### *Multiculturalism*

The issue of multiculturalism with regard to the situation between Quebec and the rest of Canada was already touched upon briefly, but since multiculturalism in all its complexity gained so much attention when the respondents defined their identities as Canadians in their narratives, it deserves to be discussed in more detail. Most respondents mentioned the cultural and linguistic diversity in Canada as something that affects the identity construction process in the national level, and, based on the narratives, it can be concluded that it greatly affects the identities of individual Canadians as well. Hannah's account highlights some of the aspects that were central in many respondents' narratives (emphasis added):

(52) I grew up in an area that was *predominantly* settled by Ukrainians about 100 yrs ago. *Many* of my friends were of Ukrainian heritage, as am I. Although are [*sic*] families have been here for *many* generations and *usually only* our grandparents and parents can *still* speak Ukrainian, *many still* refer to themselves as Ukrainian, after being Canadian. *Although* we speak English, we don't feel a *strong connection* to being English, *unless* we actually happen to be of British descent... When I consider my own identity, *I am first and foremost Canadian*, not English. Secondly, I identify with the *heritage* of my *ancestors*... the Ukrainian culture was very much a part of my life (*traditional* dancing, holidays, food, language, etc.). On my mother's side I am English and Irish, but *associate* less with that identity even though I speak English because I am not as *surrounded* by those specific cultures as much. It's *hard* to say what being an English Canadian consist [*sic*] of because there are many English Canadians who are of *very different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds*. We *all* speak English and live in Canada, but *many* of us practice *very different traditions* and have *very different backgrounds*. I think this is why there is *less* of a feeling of national identity between English Canadians than there is with French Canadians (they are mostly of French heritage and background). (Hannah)

A diverse ethnic background is an aspect of the Canadian culture that Hannah and many other respondents shared, and it seemed to be of great significance to them. Hannah's attachment to her own heritage shows as an appreciation of traditions and cultural practices. Johanna also draws attention to the importance of ethnic background in her narrative by stating that "even if you are born in Canada, you are still inclined to tell someone that you are from somewhere else". Hannah's notion of the way in which people in her community tend to refer to themselves as Ukrainian even though they might not even know the language anymore and might have lost other cultural ties as well, is particularly interesting. It is a question of 'association' as Hannah points out. In a country as diverse as Canada where most people speak English but still practice very different cultural traditions, the question of association can get rather confusing, and it can be difficult to hold on to anything fundamentally 'Canadian' because, as many respondents mentioned, it is tricky to define what these specifically Canadian traits are. As Hannah pointed out, "it's hard to say what being

an English Canadian consist [sic] of". Therefore, due to the lack of a 'strong connection' to the French or English culture, the common tendency seems to be to try to find some point of attachment and identification by connecting oneself to the broader context and the social network consisting of people with similar ethnic and cultural background, and in this process many seem to develop a strong attachment to their ethnic roots.

Based on the narratives, most respondents saw multiculturalism as a positive thing and an essential characteristic of Canada as a nation. Positive lexis such as *proud*, *love*, *best*, *enjoy*, and *embrace* were often associated with the issue of multiculturalism. Anna-Maria's example draws attention to appreciation of multiculturalism, mentioned by several other respondents as well (emphasis added):

(53) Because Canada is made up of *many* cultures and *increasingly* becoming *more diverse*, it is *harder* to instill the people the meaning and branding of Canadian identity... It seems that being Canadian means being *bilingual* and *of colour* and *accepting of other colours*... Since Canada is made up of immigrants, second generation ethnic groups *most likely* are bilingual (*not necessarily just* English and French). *However*, third and fourth generation Canadians *usually just* know English... I am an *international* person. *Although* I grew up in Canada, I feel like I have *the best of both worlds*. I can *celebrate* my *original* culture (Chinese) but *also* be in a *western* environment and with people of *many other* cultures. *BUT also* being Canadian means knowing cultural practices and celebrating of *other cultures other than your own and other than English*. (Anna-Maria)

Based on this account, cultural and linguistic diversity is seen as a great richness, indicated by the use of verbs such as *celebrate* and expressions such "I have the best of both worlds". Anna-Maria points out that even though diversity poses several challenges and makes it difficult to define what it fundamentally means to be Canadian, this diversity might form an identity in itself, marked by a speculation about the importance of race as a dimension of multiculturalism along the lines of "it seems that being Canadian means being bilingual and of colour and accepting of other colours". Julia supports this same conclusion by stating that "although diversity

isn't always so harmonious, it's something we love about Canada". Anna-Maria mentions the issue of bilingualism in her account, pointing out that, due to the immigrant background of most Canadians, bilingualism in this context might mean knowing languages other than English and French. In the middle of this linguistic diversity, the situation between the French and English languages seems to be of relatively little significance to a number of Canadians, this conclusion being affirmed by several respondents. Kelly, for example, mentioned that "language is a monumental part of the ethnicity one represents", suggesting that an individual has a special kind of attachment to the language(s) that represent one's ethnic background, and naturally these languages may gain more importance than other languages present in one's surroundings.

On the basis of these accounts, multiculturalism seems to be an issue that provokes a great variety of descriptions and interpretations. Even though multiculturalism was described by some as one of the main characteristics that brings Canadians together as a collective, some respondents suggested that the diversity multiculturalism causes can also lead to scattering. Benjamin, Bonnie, and Emily, respectively, highlight some of the issues that complicate the process of developing a set identity for Canadians (emphasis added):

(54) The question of Canadian identity is *difficult* to address because Canadians have for the most part *embraced* being multicultural. There are *few* things that we would declare to be *Canadian*. Canada is comprised of immigrants... These people have *different cultural heritages and different identities*. The *all encompassing label* of Canadian will have *trouble* accounting for their *differences*. Because of this it becomes *difficult* to *establish* what a Canadian identity is. If we can't establish what it is, how can we hammer it out as a collective? We don't have phrases like, "as American as apple pie". (Benjamin)

(55) I don't really feel as though Canadians have a *set* identity. There are *no common ties really* that bring Canadians *together*. However, I have *never* seen this as being the result of the bilingual nature of the country. Rather, I see it more as being the result of the multiculturalism that surrounds Canada.

There are *so many* nationalities, languages, religions, etc. found in Canada, that the *lack* of one identity stems *much more* from that than from the English-French language issues. (Bonnie)

(56) Another question I get is, ‘What is a typical Canadian food/sport/etc.?’ or some other question asking me to describe Canadian culture. This is always terribly difficult... My usual answer to these questions about food and culture, then, tends to be, ‘it depends on where your parents come from.’ (Emily)

The respondents demonstrate a tendency to define and internalize the concept of multiculturalism in a variety of ways by drawing attention to aspects such as the immigrant background, religion, languages, and race. The problems this versatility of interpretations can cause are indicated by the use of negative lexis, such as *difficult*, *trouble*, and *lack*. Benjamin and Emily state that because of the abundance of different cultural traditions and identities present in the Canadian society, it becomes difficult to point out things that are fundamentally Canadian and what a Canadian identity is. Benjamin refers to this lack of common ground by stating that “we don’t have phrases like, ‘as American as apple pie’”. It seems that the absence of things that can be called ultimately Canadian makes it difficult for some of the respondents to relate to the concept of Canadian identity. Kelly offers an interesting viewpoint on this issue by reflecting on the dynamic between the different cultural groups in Canada and offering a solution to the lack of unity (emphasis added):

(57) ... maybe there has been an identity in front of us for all this time. But we all... have been far too consumed and concerned with ourselves in establishing a particular identity, that we have become too *blinded* to realize that we are the *culprits* of *ostracizing* ourselves from an identity. Maybe the fact that we all are of different races is the collective identity; maybe the fact that *we all are Canadian*, living in “our home and native land” which it all boils down to, is enough of a bona fide reason to *eradicate* our differences, and *petty feuding* amongst one another. (Kelly)

On the basis of this account, Kelly seems to be rather frustrated with the way in which the different cultural and linguistic groups in Canada interact with each other,



marked by the use of negative lexis such as *blinded*, *culprits*, *ostracizing*, *petty*, and *feuding* when describing the divisive behaviour of Canadians in general. Kelly suggests that Canadians are responsible for depriving themselves of a common identity by striving for their own goals and neglecting aspects of unity and collectiveness. The fact that multiculturalism is so urgently present in the Canadian society seems to be reason enough for Kelly to promote adopting it as the thing that defines Canadians as a collective, and the fact that they live in the same country, "our home and native land", should act as a ground for developing more peaceful co-existence. These views on how multiculturalism could act as an important basis for creating a unique Canadian identity seem to echo a discourse of inclusiveness; even though people have different backgrounds and cultural attachments, it does not necessarily mean that they cannot co-exist as a united collective. The inherent goal of multiculturalism is to let all ethnic groups cherish their roots and to promote mutual understanding, and embracing this fact could help in the search for unity.

### *External Influences*

As it was noted above, it seems to be difficult for some of the respondents to define what it actually means to be Canadian, due to the presence of numerous linguistic and cultural groups and the resulting abundance of traditions, customs, and influences. In this kind of setting, many seem to find a point of identification in the process of comparing Canada as a nation to their southern neighbour, the USA. Julia gives an example of how comparing the two nations seems to bring Canadians closer together (emphasis added):

(58) *Many things unify us. For example, we are not Americans! Anything that sets us apart from the U.S. actually seems to unite us. We are a "mosaic" rather than a "melting pot". We consider ourselves better travelled, less introverted, more liberal, less religious, more diplomatic, peace loving, and take immense pride in the natural beauty of our country. At the same times [sic], I have heard it said that we could learn something about how proud Americans are and how strongly they identify themselves as a nation. In western Canada people are more likely to think of themselves as Chinese-Canadians, Japanese-Canadians, Mexican-Canadians, etc. (Julia)*

Julia uses a number of comparative expressions such as *less* and *more* to highlight the differences she has noticed between Canadians and Americans. Julia's notion of "anything that sets us apart from the U.S. actually seems to unite us" seems to suggest that there is even a desperate need for Canadians to find a basis for a sense of unity, and making comparisons between them and Americans seems to serve this purpose. However, Julia notes that the strong national identity Americans share acts as a reminder of the lack of similar sense of unity in the Canadian society. The influence of the USA may seem even overwhelming to some people, as John notes (emphasis added):

(59) While being *proud* Canadians, *most* have *resigned* to the *dominance* of the United States and *conclude* English is *the only logical language for the future*. (John)

A somewhat negative attitude toward the seemingly unbalanced dynamic between Canada and the USA is marked by the use of negative lexis such as *resigned* and *dominance* when describing the relationship of the USA and Canada. The way John describes the process of English becoming "the only logical language for the future" is interesting because it highlights the dominant role of English in Canada, becoming even more prominent because of the influence of the USA, and it may make members of some linguistic minorities to 'resign to its dominance'.

As can be noted by these examples, the relationship of many respondents with the USA seems to be somewhat contradictory. Theresa's account illustrates the difficulty of positioning oneself between two powerful forces (emphasis added):

(60) I live 'part-time' on the other side of the border, in Vermont, USA and as funny as it may sound, I *often* feel *more Canadian* there than *anywhere* in Canada. And *most of all*, I *sometimes* *envy* Americans for knowing what an American is, because it appears to me that being Canadian is *still rather undefined*. We are Canadian *as opposed to* being American. We're Canadian as opposed to being European. Or *maybe* we're Canadian as opposed to

being Quebecers. *In the end*, it doesn't matter to me. But I would *sure* like to know, because *ultimately, I feel Canadian*. (Theresa)

Theresa acknowledges the difficulty of defining 'being Canadian' noted also by some other respondents, and the repetition she utilizes when pondering on the various points of comparison intensifies the feeling of difficulty related to this issue. Theresa makes an interesting point by stating that the feeling of what it means to be Canadian has often become clearer to her when spending time in the USA. Emily reflected on the same issue by drawing attention to the question of identification (emphasis added):

(61) Within the Toronto area, it is *common* for people to ask where you're from. So *inside Canada* I will say I'm Irish and French. It is *very common* for my friends to *identify* with another country. *When we leave Canada, however, then we start saying that we are Canadian*. (Emily)

Based on this example, it seems that Emily engages in different kinds of identifications depending on whether she is inside or outside Canada. In Canada, displaying an attachment to one's ethnic background seems to be of central significance and "very common". However, when one leaves Canada, one usually starts to refer to oneself as Canadian, demonstrating strong collective identification with Canada. In this case, it seems that distance lessens the need to make comparisons between Canada and other countries, Canada thereby gaining a role as a point of identification in its own right.

### *English as a Unifying Element / English as a Global Language*

The dominant role of English in Canada is undeniable and this fact was discussed by many respondents. Some of them even mentioned language as the only thing that connects the majority of Canadians. Benjamin, Emily, and Alice, respectively, share their thoughts on this issue (emphasis added):

(62) What the 'Rest of Canada' has *in common* is not *an overwhelming commitment*. It is not a commitment for the sake of embracing an English or

rest of Canada identity. What it is, is a *commonality* of speaking *the most spoken language in the western world*. (Benjamin)

(63) I feel like English speaking Canadians, *generally, don't value language acquisition* for a few reasons. The continent of North America is so big and *English dominates throughout*. English has also become *an international language for communication*. Therefore, although I *value* language acquisition and feel that it is *impolite* to live in a country and *not attempt* to communicate in that language, many people do not see *the need to spend the time and effort*. (Emily)

(64) In the age of *globalization*, I wonder if this relationship between citizenship, nationality, and identity can further be put into question, considering that English is the *leading* language of *transnational affairs and institutions*. (Alice)

These respondents draw attention to the role of English as a global language that is used internationally for business and communication in general. North America is rather naturally dominated by English and some respondents mentioned that sometimes it is too 'easy' to be an English speaker because you can get by with it almost anywhere you go; as Emily noted, "many people do not see the need to spend the time and effort" to learn other languages. As a result, in the Canadian setting where French is the other official language, motivation for learning it is not generally very high even though it might feel 'impolite' not to know the language. When it comes to the attachment English-speaking Canadians have to the notion of being 'English Canadians', Marissa offers an interesting insight (emphasis added):

(65) I may be wrong, but I have the feeling that many Canadians who have parents that are immigrants would not *typically* identify themselves as "English-Canadians" because saying you're "English" implies that you come from a British background... On a national level, I would say that *many* Canadians do not think *much* about being an "English-Canadian" and instead view their English-speaking as being *a matter of convenience*; since the *majority* of Canadians speak English, it *makes sense* to converse in that language. (Marissa)

In her account, Marissa implies that many Canadians do not see themselves as English Canadians because ‘English’ suggests a connection to a British background. Rather, they see the use of English as “a matter of convenience” and as a language choice that “makes sense” in the Canadian context. In this kind of setting, one is led to wonder the kinds of positions that are offered to individuals with regard to the languages of general use. English has become the dominant language of Canada due to historical reasons and as its role in the contemporary society is still dominant, it is indeed a logical choice to acquire knowledge of that language. For English-speaking Canadians this knowledge goes without saying, and they are naturally placed in a rather easy position even if it sometimes seems to be too easy, considering the viewpoints of some of the respondents.

### *Acceptance, Collectivity and Equality*

As it has been discussed above, on one hand, the diversity of cultures and languages can act as a basis for greater mutual understanding between Canadians, and on the other hand, it can challenge the sense of unity due to the immense variety of different influences. However, when discussing this issue, the themes of acceptance, collectivity, and equality were brought up in many different forms. Based on Kelly and Antti’s accounts, respectively, equality between the different cultural and linguistic groups in Canada seems to be of utmost importance (emphasis added):

(66) I find this *fight* for identity to be a *childish plea* to feel *accepted*, and a *teenage obsession* of trying to create a *clique of one’s own*. To that I say, *grow up*, and *move on*. Have we forgotten about the *other* minorities which actually make up Canada? How about the *other* races who migrate to Canada, *having to adapt to our* laws, and regulations; our ethnicity, and language? If the case is to *separate* ourselves based on the various languages we speak and cultures we come from, then there should be a referendum for Italian-Canadians, Indo-Canadians, Asian-Canadians, and the list goes *on and on*. I feel our views at times become *so obscured* when a nation is *coerced into striving for totalitarianism*, as opposed to egalitarianism. I have *always* known Canada as a land of *opportunities*, a country which is

*benevolent* as well as *united*. I think Canada needs to uphold the *dignity* of its country. (Kelly)

(67) As for the issue of French (Quebecois) culture in Canada, I agree that the citizens should *work hard to preserve it within the country*. However, I am *considerably opposed* to any view, program or action that *elevates the importance of any group of people above the rest*. I suspect this has been a *frustration* for many Canadians that view the people of Quebec as *privileged*. It *must certainly* be a *difficult political situation* for the federal government to handle. trying [*sic*] to keep the French speaking minority *content*, as well as the English speaking majority... My personal view of this situation is that I would not want to keep people in a country that they don't want to belong to. If the people of Quebec want to separate, I would support it. However, if they believe that doing this would somehow *preserve* their language, they are *mistaken*. Any boundary between Quebec and the rest of Canada would be *strictly political*. (Antti)

Kelly's frustration with this issue is indicated by the use of negative lexis and attitudinal expressions such as *fight*, *a childish plea*, *a teenage obsession*, *a clique of one's own*, and *grow up, and move on*. Kelly seems to promote greater equality when it comes to the other ethnic groups that settle in Canada, "a land of opportunities" that is *benevolent* and *united* in nature. The way in which Kelly states that "Canada needs to uphold the dignity of its country" and keeps referring to Canadians as an entity by using 'we' and 'our' is noteworthy because it seems to indicate that Canadians as a collective should work towards maintaining a more tolerant and equal co-existence because the ongoing struggle to find a balance between numerous opposing forces is doing the country as a collective a lot of damage. Antti demonstrates a strong attitude towards the issue of equality as well, pointing out that he is "considerably opposed" to any action that places one group above the rest. A political discourse is notably present in Antti's account when he points out that the struggle between Quebec and the rest of Canada "must certainly be a difficult political situation for the federal government to handle". This statement acts again as a reminder of the fact that when dealing with issues that are regulated on the national level by the authorities, individual Canadians have only limited positions available to them, having to adjust to the situation in the most convenient way possible. Strong

external influences are therefore again present but it does not prevent the individuals from voicing their own opinions.

Acceptance was another central aspect when the respondents pondered on the issue of equality between different groups. John's account highlights some noteworthy aspects of this viewpoint (emphasis added):

(68) ... I also think the consent of the Canadian mentality is *acceptance*. I think with *strong leadership* a *greater proliferation* of French or even Cree (or Inuit or others) could be a *possibility* in Canada. We *accept* others' history and culture, but I think *leadership* is needed to *encourage* (as a country) *proactive behaviour* to *accept OURSELVES*. That is to *accept and more fully welcome* French into Canada, but also Cree (or Inuit)... When discussing language people are *intimidated* and *humbled* because they might *only* know one language. Or else they might feel *overwhelmed* by not knowing 'when it will end'. That is, if we *start* incorporating other languages do we *next* include Chinese language or Hindu? Or? *Proper leadership* could guide this issue and reassure it's [*sic*] direction and purpose... I think Canada as a government is bilingual (this is the "official" part); however, I think *as a collective mind we are lacking*. *Not all (or even most)* Canadians understand the purpose of language and it's [*sic*] *uniting* properties. *Most* are *intimidated* and do not like reminders of their *simple* monolingual abilities. (John)

John seems to promote a more equal and tolerant co-existence between the French speakers, English speakers, and other language groups. The existence of a political discourse is again evident because John sees "strong leadership" as the key to reaching this goal, and the way he mentions the need for "proper leadership" indicates that the current state of things is not yet satisfactory. Nevertheless, his attitude towards the goal of reaching greater mutual acceptance in a collective level seems to be rather optimistic, marked by the use of positive expressions such as *acceptance*, *a greater proliferation*, *possibility*, *accept*, *encourage*, *more fully welcome*, and *proactive*. John's attitude towards individuals Canadians seems to be somewhat contradictory. In this context, the use of negative lexis such as *intimidated*, *humbled*, *simple*, and *overwhelmed* seems to indicate, on one hand, sympathy, and on the other hand, a sense of frustration. Sympathy seems to be related to the notion that

it can indeed be overwhelming to face a situation where more and more linguistic groups start to demand equal rights and there is no knowing “when it will end”. Then again, frustration seems to be connected to the realization that a lot of Canadians know only one language and do not necessarily understand the potential languages have as a ‘uniting’ element. The way in which John moves from referring to only himself to referring to the collective ‘us’ is interesting because he seems to lean to the “collective mind” for support. The issue of sympathy was also brought up by Anna-Maria who elaborated on the balance between French Canadians and English Canadians (emphasis added):

(69) Seems like the French Canadians are *very well* educated in English but the ROC [rest of Canada] is *not very well* educated in French. It is *not really balanced*, now I know why the French *fight* to keep their language because it can *easily be assimilated or throw [sic] away* with each generation because Canada does not put *enough emphasis* on French identity. (Anna-Maria)

Anna-Maria seems to promote more efficient acquisition and recognition of the French language because now the balance between the French and English speakers is not equal; French Canadians usually know English but the English speakers do not often know French, and this gives the French Canadians enough reason to ‘fight’ to maintain their language because otherwise it could “easily be assimilated or throw [sic] away”. The need for collective responsibility is also present as Anna-Maria states that “Canada does not put enough emphasis on French identity”.

The respondents generally acknowledged that finding a way to maintain an equal co-existence can be really challenging but there are possibilities to improve the situation. Michael and Emma, respectively, reflect on the issue of collectivity, providing some beautiful examples (emphasis added):

(70) Two languages that define a nation. *It all depends on your perspective*. The way I see it isn’t “French Canada” or “English Canada”, I see a nation that *shares* two languages. I believe that *even* if the so called ROC [rest of Canada] is *primarily* speaking english [sic], doesn’t mean that we aren’t a part of the french [sic] culture. We *still share* each other’s



language, culture, tradition. Canada is a multicultural nation and with that *we all have our differences*. We may not all speak the languages *at the same skill level* but *we still share it*. A *beautiful* example of the two languages *coming together* is displayed when the national anthem is sung with *half of it* in english [sic] and *the other half* in french [sic]. *The words are different but the meaning is still the same*. I'm *proud* of the fact that *we (Canada)* have two official languages and *celebrate many other cultures*. (Michael)

(71) *We're all different*, which in essence, means *we're all the same*. When I meet Canadians abroad, I *instantly* get this Canadian *vibe*. *Even* if they're Provinces away from where you live, you *somehow* feel *at home* when you talk to them. There's some *indefinable, intangible* aspect of what it means to be Canadian... If you look at the West Coast people and compare them to the east coast people, and then the Albertans, Prairies, Northern Ontarians, Southern Ontarians etc... you'll get *a more holistic point of view*. When you add it all up- that's what Canada means to me. *Not just my little area, but the whole thing*. (Emma)

As Michael points out, the way one sees the situation between the French and English languages is a question of 'perspective'. Both Michael and Emma seem to promote the sameness Canadians have despite their differences, noted by the strikingly frequent use of the verb *share*. This seems to support the idea of inclusiveness instead of exclusiveness. Both of them demonstrate a positive attitude towards this issue by using positive lexis such as *beautiful, proud, celebrate, home, indefinable, and intangible*. The "Canadian vibe" described by Emma was mentioned by some other respondents as well, and it is a clear sign of the collective feeling shared by many Canadians, no matter which part of Canada they are from or what language they speak; as Emma mentioned, it is "not just my little area, but the whole thing".

### *Non-Identity/Multi-Identity*

The discussion above has highlighted numerous issues that the respondents considered important while pondering on the topic of what it means to be a Canadian and what kinds of aspects are present in the process of developing a coherent identity

on the national level and then relating to that as an individual. As a concluding viewpoint, it feels appropriate to discuss the terms of “non-identity” and “multi-identity” introduced by Grace. She shared her thoughts on the nature of identity, proving some thought-provoking insights (emphasis added):

(72) From my perspective, *most* English speaking Canadians of non-aboriginal origin come from *such divers* [sic] backgrounds that *a root origin or identity is difficult* to determine. This *non-identity* (or *perhaps multi-identity*) has *somehow* formed an identity in itself for *many* Canadians. In this light, Canada is a country where origin has *little* to do with identity. *Everyone* is (supposedly) *included* and *equal* as Canadians *without regard* for a previous identity. *However*, to continue in this direction is *idealistic only* for those who *lack a deeply rooted and ancestral sense of nationality*. An identity of non-identity can be *demeaning* for those who define themselves in terms of their ancestry... For myself, nationality means *very little*. *Perhaps* this feeling comes from the education system of Canada, reinforcing the non-identity identity. Or *maybe* this is *something* that comes from an immigrant family. *Regardless*, of why I do not *associate* myself with *any particular* national identity, it seems that national identity is *quite important*. How an identity is *constructed*, *where it comes from* and *how to compensate when one is missing* these are questions that I carry with me throughout my *vagabonding*. *Many* non-Canadians, especially Europeans, have *difficulty* understanding my *lack of attachment to one particular country*. Could it be that a national identity is defined in terms of what it is not? (Grace)

In this extract, Grace uses the terms of non-identity and multi-identity to describe a situation where Canadians, without regard to one’s ethnic background or identity, are “included and equal”. This kind of approach creates a sense of tolerance. However, Grace points out that this approach is ideal only for Canadians who do not have any specific ethnic attachments. Grace points out that, due to having spent years abroad, nationality as such does not have any special meaning to her but she has noticed its significance in general because people do not necessarily understand her “lack of attachment to one particular country”. The nature of identity seems to continue to be a target of speculation for Grace; external influences and opinions try to position her

in a certain way and her personal views may differ considerably from these. It indeed seems that the meaning of identity and its role in a diverse cultural and linguistic context continues to provoke some fundamental questions in the minds of individual Canadians.

This final section of the analysis aimed at mapping out what components other than languages the identities of English-speaking Canadians consist of. The struggle between Quebec and the rest of Canada seemed to provoke a great variety of feelings, from frustration to sympathy. In this context, the political discourse seemed to be of great importance. Many of the respondents defined the struggle in political terms, and the political discourse seemed to offer only a limited variety of position to individual Canadians. For some this issue seemed to be of very little significance, marked by a tendency to distance themselves from it on the grounds of the language struggle between French and English not being an everyday issue in their surroundings. The general tendency, however, seemed to be to promote greater equality between both groups. Somewhat overlapping with the issue of equality between Quebec and the rest of Canada was multiculturalism, which seemed to be regarded as an integral part of the Canadian society and of being Canadian in general. Most of the respondents had a diverse ethnic background, and as Canada is indeed a land of immigrants, many lamented the lack of things that could be described as fundamentally Canadian. In this context, the urgency to find something tangibly Canadian often also tended to lead to comparisons between Canada and the USA. As a result of this confusion, many respondents seemed to find a point of attachment and identification in their ethnic roots. Based on the narratives, multiculturalism could be seen as an authoritative discourse, which both reflected and constructed the individuals' worldviews, and it was generally appreciated and seen as a source of pride even though in some cases it could also lead to scattering of different ethnic groups, thereby diminishing the sense of unity. It was also worth noting that the multicultural nature of the Canadian society could lead to the situation between the French-speaking and English-speaking groups becoming of less and less significance to individual Canadians because some other languages and cultures may be more urgently present in their surroundings. To wrap up the discussion on the components of identity, the themes of acceptance, collectivity, equality, and

inclusiveness were a permeable feature in a majority of the narratives. Everyone is supposed to be included and equal in the Canadian society, no matter what language one speaks and which ethnicity one represents. This goal might not be easy to reach in reality but the respondents generally demonstrated a genuine interest in promoting this cause, and it can be seen as a sign of profound benevolence.

## **7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Discussing the Findings and Comparing Them to Previous Research**

The analysis above aimed at gaining an understanding of the English Canadian identity based on the respondents' narratives. The main interest was on the effect the issue of bilingualism has on the development of individual English Canadians' identities and what kind of criteria they use for defining themselves as bilingual. A crucial point of interest was the meaning of this bilingualism, or the lack of it, for these individuals and what kinds of aspects affect their language identity in general. The discussion concerning language was broadened to include other relevant aspects of their identities as well. The initial assumption was that language is only one significant part of the complicated identity puzzle in the specific Canadian setting, and that assumption proved to be true.

The findings suggest that the role the French language plays in the identities of these English Canadians is often more symbolic than functional. Some of the respondents demonstrated having a deep personal attachment to the language, usually due to their cultural and family background or residence in or close to a French-speaking area, and therefore it is safe to assume that it is a significant part of their identity and the way in which they position themselves with regard to their surroundings and fellow Canadians. However, the narratives of most of the respondents indicated that even though they might regard the French language and culture as an important part of the Canadian culture and society, the language itself does not usually have any profound meaning to them at least in a functional sense. This was often due to the fact that the respondents lived far away from the French-speaking areas, and as the language was not urgently present or needed in their everyday surroundings, the respondents' skills in it tended to deteriorate and the language did not have a proper chance to gain a steady footing as an integral part of their identity. However, the complexity of this issue must be highlighted here. Even though the symbolic and emotional aspects of the relationship between language and identity were often brought up by the respondents, some of them clearly demonstrated a genuine appreciation for the

applicability of the French language in various domains of their everyday lives, thereby enforcing the functional view of language. As a result, the discussion about language and identity interestingly included characteristics of both functional and symbolic meanings, the functional side emphasizing the practical applicability of language and the symbolic side drawing attention to the more emotional aspects of language. This fascinating multiplicity will be elaborated a bit more later on in the discussion.

The respondents used a wide variety of different criteria for describing their own bilingual abilities, indicating a difficulty to define what being a bilingual fundamentally means. Competence was usually seen as the key element in making these evaluations. However, when the respondents discussed their language identities from a wider perspective, it seemed that emotional aspects started to gain more and more importance. In the Canadian context, individuals seem to be placed in the middle of an immense variety of external influences, ranging from the positioning difficulties with regard to the problematic relationship between the French-speaking and English-speaking groups to the challenges the strikingly multicultural environment poses to individuals. In this kind of setting, strong master discourses, such as political and multicultural discourses, inevitably affect the way in which individual Canadians define themselves and position themselves relative to their surroundings and fellow Canadians. However, it seems that, despite the existence of strong external influences, individuals still have latitude to make their own interpretations and evaluations. This was indicated by the great variety of different viewpoints and attitudes when discussing the role of bilingualism and other languages and cultures in their identity formation. The linguistic resources individual respondents utilized suggested that these viewpoints and attitudes vary from one extreme to another, from negative to positive, from frustrated to sympathetic. The struggle between Quebec and the rest of Canada, for example, was generally described using rather negative vocabulary, whereas multiculturalism provoked more positive descriptions.

Based on the analysis, it seems that the identities of individual English-speaking Canadians are intriguingly diverse but at the same time they are somehow marked by

a sense of sameness. Languages have inevitably an important role in the identity formation process but this issue is by no means clear-cut. The respondents' background affected greatly the way in which different languages were seen: some felt a strong attachment to French due to family connections or career aspirations, some regarded the use of English as a matter of convenience, and some valued the language of their ancestors highly even though they may not even know the language themselves. In this process, the role and importance of languages seems to be rather relative and dependent on several factors. Furthermore, in the middle of this diversity, some respondents lamented that it is difficult to point out anything that could be defined as uniquely Canadian. However, for some this indefinability in particular seemed to form the essence of the Canadian identity. Most respondents seemed to take immense pride in the fact that in the Canadian society everyone is supposedly included and equal, and the themes of acceptance and collectivity were a strikingly prominent feature of a majority of the narratives.

The official policy of bilingualism in Canada suggests that individual Canadians should work towards becoming bilingual. However, as it has been noted in the previous chapters, most English-speaking Canadians do not consider themselves bilingual, and this notion is supported by the findings of my study. Only seven of the 20 respondents considered themselves as French-English bilingual. The respondents suggested numerous reasons for not learning French properly. Kinginger (2004: 221) has stated that second language learners are supposed to be learning a language of one's surroundings and are supposed to have a relatively strong motivation for learning. Considering this statement, the Canadian setting is nowhere near ideal for learning French effectively because most respondents noted that they never hear French outside school and it simply is not an issue of everyday life for them. As a result, it must be difficult to establish the French language as an integral part of one's identity. This problem of not hearing French enough has also been acknowledged by Redhead (2002: 57). However, it should be noted that the French language was regarded as an important identity element by many respondents so no generalizing statements can be made. The motivations for learning French were generally related to education and career goals and some more profound goals related to cultural

awareness, widening of perspective, and exploration of ethnic background, and these findings correspond well to previous research (e.g. Baker 2001 and Burck 2005).

A lot of the previous research (e.g. Baker 2001) has acknowledged the difficulty of defining bilingualism, and the findings of my study strongly support these conclusions. The respondents used different criteria for evaluating their bilingual abilities and seemed to have different views on what it takes to be a 'real' bilingual. Some of the widely acknowledged views of bilingualism which seemed to relate to the findings of my study in the most appropriate way are functional bilingualism, proposed by Baker (2001: 12-13), and the holistic view of bilingualism, proposed by Cook (1992, as quoted by Baker 2001: 8-9). Functional bilingualism suggests that the use of two different languages is determined by everyday needs, and the holistic view of bilingualism describes language use along the same lines by suggesting that the languages one uses can be seen as a dynamic entity where the different languages are utilized according to the context. The relationship of most of the respondents considering themselves bilingual and the French language seemed to be rather functional, the language being regarded as a tool for reaching career goals and tackling specific communicative situations, for example. It should be borne in mind, however, that, as Joseph (2004: 185) has stated, linguistic identity has several layers, and therefore the question regarding the relationship between different languages can be difficult to address. According to my findings, the languages the respondents utilized in their everyday lives were sometimes seen in a functional sense but then again many respondents demonstrated a deep emotional attachment to the language of one's ancestors that one may not even have a proper command of, indicating a tendency to approach the question of language in a more symbolic sense. Therefore it could be concluded that the languages that have a role as building blocks of one's identity are by no means exclusive: different languages can have different meanings to an individual and they can be appreciated for very different reasons, all of them thereby gaining an important role in defining an individual. Languages seem to be an inseparable part of the Canadian identity in an interesting way: one does not even need to be proficient in a certain language and it does not need to be an integral part of, say, one's family life, but still languages mould the way in which people relate to



their surroundings because in a bilingual and multilingual/cultural environment different languages are bound to be omnipresent.

The multi-facetedness of identity demonstrated in the narratives is well in tune with previous research. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 26), Grossberg (1996: 91-92), and Hall (1999: 11, 250-254) have discussed the multiplicity of identity and the way in which identity can consist of various, even conflicting pieces drawn from different sources. Hall's (1999: 253) view on identity being a meeting point where the subjective experiences of the individual and the influence of social and historical factors come together as well as the process of identity formation being marked by a constant negotiation between individual preferences and external influences correlates well with the findings of my study. In the narratives, the respondents presented themselves as active agents in the process of figuring out their identities, indicated by an ability to voice critical and profound opinions as well as to express a great variety of emotions when discussing the issues which are important with regard to their identities. However, the way in which many respondents relied heavily on the dominant discourses, for example the political discourse, is a clear indication that external influences have a crucial role in determining how individuals can position themselves. Grossberg's (1996: 91-92) findings about the way in which the importance of different parts of identity can vary depending on the circumstances are also interesting. It seemed that many respondents in my study saw the sometimes even troubling diversity present in their surroundings as providing a chance to experience the world in a more versatile way than would be possible in a more homogeneous environment. Some respondents, for example, saw the ability to speak both English and French as providing access to a more flexible communication framework and a chance to experience the best of two different cultures.

## **7.2 The Relevance of This Study**

Burck (2005) suggests in her study that the research concentrating on the language use of individuals in a multilingual environment has only recently started to utilize the accounts of the language users themselves: the tendency has been to describe

their language use rather than let them reflect on their language use themselves. In this sense, the method for gathering data for this study could be seen as a good choice. I think it is important to hear the opinions of the individuals themselves and to hear how they reflect on their language use and the relationship with the languages at their disposal. The questions and writing task in the question form managed to provoke an interesting variety of personal histories about individual English-speaking Canadians' language use and identity, and they provided rich data for the analysis section of this study. In a qualitative research framework, it is of utmost importance to let the individual voices to be heard, and in this sense the narratives written by the respondents were utilized effectively.

The Canadian society is so diverse in linguistic and cultural terms that it provides a great variety of interesting things to study. In this context, the choice to look at the formation of identity proved to be especially fulfilling. Burck (2005: 27) has drawn attention to the difficulty of positioning in two different cultures that derives from being bilingual. This issue becomes even more relevant in a multicultural context where being bilingual may only be one piece of the complex language and culture puzzle. As this study has indicated, the role of the official languages may sometimes be of relatively little significance as some other languages may be more urgently present in one's surroundings and thereby may gain more importance in some specific situations. Therefore this study has aimed at further highlighting the challenges for identity formation in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

The titles of 'English Canadian' and 'French Canadian' have been widely used to refer to the two linguistic groups at the heart of the heated language discussion in Canada. However, several respondents seemed to oppose the use of any labels when referring to these groups. Generally they saw the label of 'English Canadian' rather artificial and had notable problems with relating to it. This seems to indicate an interesting dimension of the widely promoted ideals of inclusiveness and equality in the Canadian society, and also offers a thought-provoking aspect with regard to the way in which the individual English speakers see their own first language. This could be seen as a fresh viewpoint when discussing the relationship of language and identity in the Canadian context. However, even though most respondents seemed to

prefer the use of 'Canadian' instead of 'English Canadian' when referring to English-speaking Canadians, they seemed to use the label 'French Canadian' with relative ease when referring to the other language group. It is rather thought-provoking to consider implications of this tendency as it seems that, regardless of the general drift to promote all-inclusive collectivity, the use of labels for referring to various groups such as the French-speaking Canadians still tends to be, either consciously or unconsciously, rather natural and normal.

### **7.3 Implications of This Study for Future Research**

Some of the information received in the question forms, such as age and place of residence of the respondents, could not be fully utilized within the framework of this study. Questions concerning educational background and professional life could perhaps have been more fruitful as the style and content of some of the narratives clearly indicated the writers having acquired higher education. Even though the information about the respondents' background could not be discussed in great detail, it was, however, implied in the narratives that age, for example, can make a difference in the perspective of an individual. Therefore it would be rewarding to look more closely at the differences in viewpoints and attitudes between different generations of Canadians with regard to the issue of bilingualism. Most of the respondents in this study were in their 20's, and many of them seemed to regard this language issue as one having no relevant connection to everyday life. However, it could be that the experiences of older generations are somewhat different, and therefore it would be interesting to conduct a study on how the attitudes towards bilingualism have developed over the years and what kinds of aspects have affected this process.

In a study of this scale, the focus had to be narrowed down to include only one language group, that of English-speaking Canadians. However, it would be highly rewarding to apply a same kind of research framework to the French-speaking group as well and see how they react to the issue of bilingualism. This kind of study would have great potential to provide highly interesting viewpoints on the attitudes and

feelings of the French speakers. Even though they are officially equal with the English speakers in the Canadian society, they are still a minority, and this fact alone is enough of a reason to provoke an intriguing dynamic between the two languages and the groups representing them. As it has been indicated in the previous chapters, the relationship between these two groups has never been easy, and therefore it would be crucial to hear both sides of this complicated story.

Canada is only one of the many countries facing challenges with regard to bilingualism. From my own perspective, the most urgently present example of the seeming co-existence of two languages is obviously the one of Finnish and Swedish. In the course of this study, I could not help but notice various similarities in the settings of these language pairs (French-English and Finnish-Swedish) in their respective contexts: their origins are related to similar historical developments, the use of each language is unevenly distributed in their surroundings, and the attitudes towards the languages vary from extremely negative to highly positive. Therefore, it would be highly rewarding to conduct a comparative study between these Canadian and Finnish contexts and focus on, for example, the attitudes towards bilingualism and what kinds of factors affect these attitudes.

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## **APPENDIX 1. THE QUESTION FORM**

### **A Question Form for Collecting Data for My Master's Thesis**

I am an English major at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland and I am currently working on my Master's thesis. The working title of my thesis is "Thoughts from a Divided Nation: Some English Canadian Views on the Question of Bilingualism in Canada and Its Effect on Their Identity Formation". The purpose of this study is to look at the issue of bilingualism in Canada from the English Canadians' perspective and try to find out how the bilingualism question in Canada affects their personal identities and perceptions of themselves as Canadians. The underlying assumption is that language is an essential part of building one's identity, and if the language issue is in disarray on a national level, it is bound to have an effect on personal identities as well.

In order to gather relevant data for my study I would like to ask you to complete a writing task for which I have provided instructions on pages 3 and 4. Additionally, I would ask you to fill in the background question form on page 2. Your answers will only be used for the purposes of this specific research and they will only be referred to as short examples in order to illustrate the main findings and themes relevant to my study. Your answers will be dealt with anonymously.

If you have any questions concerning this research, please feel free to contact either me or my advisor. I would greatly appreciate your help in getting relevant and valuable research data for my study and I look forward to reading your answers.

Best regards,  
Ilona Riikonen



**Some General Background Questions**

- What is your name?
  
- How old are you?
  
- Where were you born and in which part(s) of Canada have you lived? Where do you live right now?
  
- What languages do you speak?
  
- How would you describe your competence in French and your school experiences regarding the learning of French?
  
- In what other contexts have you needed/used French (for example the workplace, university studies, spare time and hobbies, everyday life in general, speaking French at home with parents, other relatives or your partner etc.)?
  
- Do you consider yourself bilingual? Why/ why not?

### **The Writing Task**

The purpose of this writing task is to give you a chance to reflect freely on the development of your identity as an English-speaking Canadian. Identity is created through social interaction and language plays a vital part in this ongoing process, helping one to identify with one's culture, history, and origins. Identity develops with time, and therefore this writing task could be thought of as some kind of life story when it comes to your identity as it has evolved throughout your life. You are more than welcome to refer to various life experiences and thoughts that come to you mind as long as they contribute to the initial idea of this writing task. Please write freely and in the manner and style most suitable for you. The text can take the form of a letter, a short composition, a poem, or a short story just to name a few options. The most important thing is that you feel comfortable with writing and illustrating these issues from various aspects. You can be as creative as you want and feel free to use all the space you need.

If you need some inspiration for getting started, please read the following text extract. Its purpose is to give you a possible starting point for your story if you do not know where to begin. I have also compiled some questions to further inspire you if you have any difficulties to start writing. They can be found on page 4. You do not have to answer all of them, they are just meant to give you an idea of what kinds of issues you might want to discuss in your answer.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ***The Search for a New Canadian Identity***

If Québécois and Indigenous people have a sense of nationhood, does that leave the rest of Canada a *no-nation*? If Quebec can be described as *French Canada*, does that make the rest of Canada *English Canada*?

As Quebec has numerous traits that set it apart, it is often difficult to know how to refer to the remaining parts of Canada. Perhaps the most-used phrase is *Rest of Canada (ROC)*. The problem with referring to the rest of Canada as "English Canada" is that the expression seems to connote British nationality or loyalty to British institutions.

Resnick argues that in spite of the existence of other ethnic and linguistic minorities, what the ROC has in common is an overwhelming commitment to the use of the English language. Just as French is the anchor for the Québécois identity, so English is the glue that binds ROC Canadians together - for example, through political and educational institutions

and the media. Resnick argues that since Meech Lake and Charlottetown, the Quebec question has provoked new dialogue in the ROC about what it means to be Canadian and what kind of society we really want. In other words, English Canadians are debating with new vigour their collective identity in a manner similar to that of Québécois and First Nations. And this is a good sign, because – despite the existence of divergent opinions - it brings English-speaking Canadians together to hammer out who they are as a collectivity.

Of course, the big question is how and whether these English, French, and Aboriginal conceptions of nationhood can come together in one political state.

(Hiller, Harry H. 2000. *Canadian society. A macro analysis*. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.)

### **Some Questions for Further Inspiration:**

- How do you feel now after reading this text extract? What kinds of thoughts come to your mind?
- What kind of role do languages have in your everyday life?
- How visible is bilingualism in your surroundings? How do you react to the bilingualism issue in Canada in general? What kind of role does it have in your life?
- Have you witnessed or observed any language conflicts in your surroundings? What does the coexistence of English and French look like in general? Have you noted any regional differences?
- How would you describe your own identity as an English Canadian? What are its key components?

### **Instructions for Returning the Form**

You can send the e-mail attachment to the following address: [ileemari@cc.jyu.fi](mailto:ileemari@cc.jyu.fi)

Furthermore, if you have any questions or comments about this writing task or the background question form, please feel free to contact me via e-mail.

If you so wish, I would be happy to send you a summary of the main findings of my study after I have finished writing my Master's thesis to show my appreciation for your highly important contribution to this study.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this study and I hope the writing task was a nice and rewarding experience for you. I am looking forward to reading your story and I wish you all the best.