

**“A Guiding Light”: Illuminating the Path for French
Immersion Teacher Identity Exploration in Alberta,
Canada.**

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore the phenomenon of teacher identity and more specifically second language teacher identity. The purpose of this research is to provide French immersion teachers in Alberta, Canada, a platform to share their stories and unique perspectives.

This qualitative study was conducted in Alberta with in-service French immersion teachers. The data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews and the data was analysed using a dialogic narrative analysis approach.

The narratives of each participant were/have been categorized into three sections: the social nature of identity, the discontinuity of identity and the multiplicity of identity. Each category offers a comparison of the similarities and differences between each participant that acknowledges the individuality of the teachers, as well as the French immersion community in which they belong.

The enriching stories and perspectives provide insight into the challenging yet rewarding life of French immersion teachers. The findings from the study offer a tool and resource in French immersion decision making processes in the development of immersion programs as well as highlights the necessity for teacher identity exploration.

Keywords: Teacher, Identity, French Immersion, Narratives, Alberta

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1 INTRODUCTION

Research on teacher identity became a point of interest in the educational sector in the late 1980s (Beijaard et al., 2004) and the field of research has steadily increased since then (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Along with the rise in research on teacher identity, a subcategory was also becoming increasingly popular during the late 90s, with research on Second Language Teacher identity (SLTI) (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 21). The scope of research on teacher identity is greater than SLTI with only a handful of researchers focusing on SLTI (Kayi-Aydar, 2015, p.137) and even fewer researchers focussing on the subset of SLTI with regard to immersion teacher identity (Walker & Tedick, 2000).

Although teacher identity research and SLTI bear many similarities; the role of language is not present in the majority of teacher identity research and language is an assumed tool used by teachers. This differs for second language teachers where the instructional language is a focus, therefore SLTI researchers recognized and defined the role of language in identity formation as a “process that is inextricably intertwined with language and discourse” (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 39). With this, researchers in SLTI accepted a postmodern way of understanding language teacher identity as “a critical component in the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of the language classroom” (Varghese et al., 2005, p.22).

Teacher identity and SLTI have been conceptualized in a variety of ways and accepting multiple definitions is advantageous as it provides a holistic representation of the theories (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teacher identity has been defined as “a profoundly individual and psychological matter because it concerns the self-image and other-image of particular teachers” (Varghese et al., 2005, p.39). This definition reinforces the individual and abstract nature of identity and consequently can explain why research continues to lack a concise definition. Beijaard et al. (2004) encourage researchers to continue to work together for the betterment of future research, by contributing to the foundation on defining teacher identity and recognizing the importance of research to gain

a better understanding of the life of a teacher in school. The same line of research continues by Akkerman & Meijer (2011) and more recently by Pappa, et al. (2017). Pappa et al. (2017) draw on previous research to define teacher identity “as a lifelong process of negotiation of who teachers perceive themselves to be as individuals and as professionals within their immediate and wider socio-cultural context” (p. 79). Although the definitions of teacher identity continue to be varied, a comparison of the three articles by researchers Beijaard et al, (2004), Akkerman & Meijer (2011) and Pappa et al. (2017) show a progressive timeline from a basic foundation to the consideration of more intricate factors like the role of language and emotion. Recent research emphasizes the necessity to understand teachers on a more profound level. Varghese et al. (2005) argue that “we need to have a clearer sense of who they [second language teachers] are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim, or which are assigned to them” (p.22).

My interest in the field of teacher identity and SLTI, stems from my lack of understanding of my own professional identity as a French immersion teacher, which consequently led to my questioning of my value in the teaching profession. The purpose of this study is to take a more personal approach to teacher identity research and provide French Immersion teachers in the province of Alberta a platform to share who they are as individuals. I hope to create a bridge between in-class practice and educational research and encourage reflectivity in order to promote self-awareness. A better understanding of teacher self arguably creates good conditions for further developing pedagogical practice (Pennington & Richards, 2016) which consequently, can support the positive development of teacher identity. Throughout my research, I will use my own experience to clarify concepts and provide the reader with an honest exploration of my identity that will act as examples to support my conceptualization of teacher identity.

Teacher identity and SLTI research act as the foundation of my study, that I use as a base to construct my understanding of French immersion teacher identity. I will compare and contrast the literature available on both teacher

identity and SLTI to develop immersion teacher identity research. I will draw on three crucial elements as categorized by Akkerman and Meijer (2011) : “the social nature of identity, the discontinuity of identity and the multiplicity of identity” (p.308) as my theoretical framework. My understanding will be enriched by analysing the literature on SLTI and the role of language, which will segue into a more specific and less researched area of French Immersion teacher identity in a Canadian context.

2 SOCIAL NATURE OF SL TEACHER IDENTITY

Teaching is an unusual profession in that teachers walk the fine line between the personal and professional by “weaving a web of connectedness” (Palmer, 1988, p.9). In other words, building strong relationships inside and outside the classroom and finding the balance between sharing personal experiences in a professional setting. Palmer (1988) argues that “what we teach will never ‘take’ unless it connects with the inward, living core of our students’ lives, with our student’ inward teachers” (p.11) rendering teaching without connectedness as obsolete. The traditional standard of teaching depicted in the media, is the transmission of information from teacher to student. Teachers and educational researchers know this to be false as teaching is a far more involved process than a simple transmission of information and the increase in research on the social dynamics of teaching is a testament to the recognition of the difficulties and intricacies of teaching. Furthermore, recent teacher identity research has gone beyond the scope of the teacher and student relationship to reflect on other influences that impact teacher identity such as curriculum, the government and language (Janzen, 2014; Lanas & Kelterchmans, 2015; Pappa et al, 2017)

The relationships formed throughout one’s life are recognised as foundational to identity. A relationship that is neglected in teacher identity research but is a focal point in SLTI is the relationship that teachers have to their instructional language. This is where teacher identity research and SLTI research begin to diverge. Second language teachers often reflect on who they are in their first language versus who they become when using their second language (Varghese, 2006; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Pappa et al., 2017). For example, I perceive my French teacher identity differently than my English teacher identity because I am more comfortable and relaxed speaking English, and lack casual vocabulary in French.

Akkerman and Meijer (2011), explore the social nature of identity by recognizing how the role of ‘others’ influences the self. This phenomenon can be explained with the following example: “speaking as if you were ‘your mother’ or

'your partner'" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p.314). The way you speak is indicative of where someone is from, who they spend their time with etc. which becomes part of one's identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 314). From my perspective, this happens as a student in an international master's program in Finland. I share my knowledge of education from my Canadian perspective. The way I view education and my opinions are reflective of my experience as a student and teacher in Canada and I use that position when discussing international topics. In a Canadian context, working with Canadian teachers I often revert to my Finnish or French perspective and speak from experience working in those educational systems. The way I interact in a classroom setting is highly influenced by the personnel present in the space. I aim to add a new perspective to the discussions and therefore take on a different voice to share new insight.

It is important to note that all relationships influence teachers differently, as they are at different distances in relation to the teacher. I will use the following levels and explain the relationships present at each level: The macro (society), the meso (school) and the micro (classroom) (Costa & Norton, 2017). Each level is representative of the distance in relation to the teacher. The macro level is the furthest from the teacher as it represents the educational ideologies and values imposed on the teacher by the society at large (Costa & Norton, 2017), this can be seen on a more concrete level as the relationship to the government and the curriculum. The meso level is representative of the teachers' teaching community. This includes in school relationships such as with administration and colleagues and past relationships with family, mentors and teachers that influence teacher identity. The influence of a teaching community is a recurring theme in the research on CLIL teachers conducted by Pappa et al. (2017) by highlighting the impact of opinions, experiences and ideas of others on the self (p. 92). Lastly, at the micro level, within the classroom, students play a key role in teacher identity formation. The formation of identity is happening simultaneously between teacher and student, student and teacher and student-

to-student. Costa and Norton (2017) argue that optimal teaching occurs when all three levels work cohesively together.

As the purpose of this study is to research second language teacher identity, the role of language must be acknowledged as a key relationship present at every level. At the macro level, language can be seen in the wider sense of how the second language is valued in society, at the meso level the language culture present in the school and the micro level how language can alter relationships formed in the classroom. This section will explore the influential relationships present at each level and how they contribute to teacher identity.

2.1 Relationships at the Macro Level

Relationships at the macro level can be seen as involving entities that are not present physically in the classroom, but rather external influences that affect all teachers. For example, an educational reform implemented by the government can be viewed as crucial to establishing a positive or negative relationship between teachers and policy makers. Day (2002), recognized that there can be negative ramifications on teacher identity as educational reform does not always take into account the opinions and needs of the teacher, which can lead to hostility between policy makers in the government and teachers in the classroom. In addition, immersion teacher voices have been “rarely heard” (Tedick & Walker, 2000, p.6) which is an indicator of the disparity between government and teacher. This was seen clearly at the Alberta Teacher Association (ATA) meetings I attended monthly for my school. There was a sense of ‘us versus them mentality’ concerning the government budget cuts and the teacher workload. The frustration present at the meetings by the teachers and reinforced by the president of the ATA, inhibited any positive change as the focus was solely on what Alberta teachers were lacking instead of what Alberta teachers have to work with. I recognize the high demands from the government and the lack of collaboration between the government and the teachers when such decisions are

made, but in my experience the negativity surrounding changes appeared to inhibit any positive resolutions to be made in the meetings.

The curriculum is a daily presence that can also be seen at the macro level and affects teacher identity. Through focus group interviews and dialogue incited by literature, Janzen (2014) highlights the power the curriculum in Manitoba, Canada has on the teacher identities of her participants. The teachers struggle with the magnitude of the curriculum, which hinders their creativity and freedom in the classroom. The main citation: “free yourself sister”, from Janzen’s study and used as the title of her article, reflects the desire of the Canadian teachers to break free from the constraints of the curriculum. The daily presence of the curriculum and competitiveness between teachers to complete all the outcomes affects the teachers in Janzen’s study negatively. The teachers are forced to negotiate their identity to respond to the demands. The curriculum acts as a guidebook that teachers must follow, but when the guidebook is unrealistic and demotivating, then negativity begins to infiltrate into the teaching practices of the participants. The Alberta curriculum was overwhelming as a first-year teacher and the unrealistic expectations and my inability to meet the demands affected how I viewed myself as a teacher and negatively influenced my perception of self.

The imposition of the government and the demands of the curriculum in the examples above, inhibit teachers and affect their perceived value as working members in the field. The acknowledgement of such imposition and an understanding of why teachers are feeling constrained or unheard is extremely beneficial for the betterment of the teaching profession as commitment to teaching is seen as an instrumental factor in teacher satisfaction and success in the classroom (Day, 2002, p.688).

2.2 Relationships at the Meso Level

Satisfaction and the feeling of belonging in a teaching community is fundamental to positive perceptions of self and teacher identity. The key relationships at the meso level represent two teaching communities. The first community includes

the key influencers in becoming a teacher i.e. relationships with past teachers and the second community represents the relationships with colleagues and administrators.

There is value in understanding the role of past teachers on current teacher identity. Palmer (1988) recognizes that “as I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject and our way of being together” (p.1). In other words, there is mutual growth between student and teacher and the way in which a student is taught influences their student identity and their future teacher identity. This is present in Palmer’s experiences as a student. Palmer (1988) argues for authenticity in teaching practice and his passion is derived from his own teachers and their authenticity in the classroom. In his book *The Heart of a Teacher*, Palmer (1988) recognizes that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique” (p.3) but rather is based on the authenticity of the teacher in the classroom and this is the driving force behind his work. The presence of past teachers is fundamental to understanding my teacher identity. My teachers saw my strengths working with younger students which inspired my decision to pursue teaching in University. Now as a teacher, I am aware that the way I teach is reflective of the way I was taught and my idea of what constitutes a ‘good teacher’. I worked best with encouraging and positive teachers who created a nurturing and warm environment which is now at the core of my teaching philosophy.

The second teaching community is based on relationships within a school, Pappa et al. (2017), highlight the importance of collegial communities by stating that the most frequent mention of a positive sense of belonging was with their colleagues (p.92). Moate (2014) introduces the notion of ‘mutual pedagogical relationships’ and argues that “teachers of different subjects, working with pupils of different pedagogical beliefs have a lot to offer one another” (p.388). The idea of mutual pedagogical relationships can be viewed as mutually beneficial and essential to the formation of teacher identity because “for teacher professionals it is often the communities within which we find ourselves that offer the ‘pedagogically oriented’ relationships to enrich our being and

becoming” (Moate, 2014, p.388). Moate’s research addresses the subset communities of second language teachers that belong to the greater community of teachers. There is a sense of understanding by the subset community as to what challenges and difficulties arise as second language teacher. Pappa et al. (2017) acknowledge this understanding by recognizing that “through co-operations and the act of sharing, teachers co-constructed and made available the concept of the CLIL group that collaborates and shares the same principles. This, in turn, helped build rapport and made new and former members feel valued and included” (p. 92). Through the exploration of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teacher communities in Finland; research by Moate (2014) and Pappa et al. (2017) reinforce the importance of teacher communities and how foreign languages impact the discourse within the communities. Moate’s research aims to understand teachers’ perceptions of the communities in which they belong and Pappa et al. look at the role of emotion in the formation and maintaining of the second language teaching communities. The sense of community is important, yet sometimes an aspect of teaching that is overlooked. Moate (2014) and Pappa et al. (2017) recognize the value in hearing how the teachers view their role within the communities and how the communities contribute to a greater sense of self.

In the research conducted by Pappa et al. (2017), the study exemplifies the feeling of loneliness that teachers in the CLIL program experience, a feeling that I also experienced as a first-year teacher entering a new school. Relationships with colleagues and the administration are fundamental to a sense of belonging within a school culture and the feeling of being valued and heard.

As a first-year teacher, I tried to emulate the lessons of my colleagues and viewed their teaching style as better than my own. This led to superficial lesson plans, a teaching style that was inauthentic and negative feelings about my value as a teacher. By the end of the year, I was questioning my role in the students’ development and who I was as a teacher. I believed that I did not fit the teacher mould and wondered if teaching was the right profession. I knew that I needed to gain more life experience and refine my teacher identity. I travelled to France

to explore a new education system and work in a different teaching community. I gained perspective and more confidence in the classroom because I was the only native English teacher in the school and I was able to reflect on my own teacher identity without comparing myself to others. This was a pivotal moment in my understanding of my teacher identity. My collaboration on an international scale with my French colleagues inspired my passion for teaching.

The meso level represents the support system available in the personal and professional life of a teacher. In my case the personal life was comprised of my journey becoming a teacher and my professional life was the relationships formed at school that led to my satisfaction as a teacher. A sense of community and belonging contributes positively to a teachers' sense of identity.

2.3 Relationships at the Micro Level

The relationship with students at the micro level is the closest relationship present in the social nature of teacher identity. Kelchtermans (2009) recognizes that "teaching implies a relationship of responsibility for a group of pupils or students" (p.258) therefore the relationship between student and teacher is at the root of teaching. This idea is present is stated above, in Palmer's (1988) work as he emphasizes that the sense of connection between student and teacher is vital to good teaching practice and building the "weave of connectedness" that optimizes good teaching. Palmer is known for instigating a movement to promote the benefits of teacher vulnerability on student learning.

Britzman (1991) and Kelchtermans (2009) develop the notion of teacher vulnerability by emphasizing the impact of teacher identity on students and vice versa. Kelchtermans (2009) highlights the importance of the teacher and student relationship on teacher perception and identity because "the teacher (educator) wants to be seen by the students in a particular way, but at the same time his/her ideas about him/herself as a teacher (educator) are influenced by what other-in this case their students think about him/her" (p. 259). Britzman (1991) aims to look at the pathway between personal and professional identity by looking at

power relations between teacher and student. The observations made by Britzman, accentuate how important self-reflection is to enhance the learning experience for students, and aid in the professional growth of teachers. Her study focuses on the personal background of two preservice teachers who plan lessons to encourage a dialogue with their students on power positions as the pre-service teachers (participants) believed this was lacking in their experience as students (Britzman, 1991, p.65). The preservice teachers are faced with contradicting perspectives from their students (Britzman, 1991, p.73). This led the participants to self-reflect on the way they presented the material on power relations and provided them with new insight into their identity. The isolation of the personal history and professional identity of the two pre-service teachers caused tension in the classroom between the teacher and students because the pre-service teachers did not share why they were invested in the lesson therefore the students did not respond in the way they had hoped. The preservice teachers wanted their students to be vulnerable but were unwilling to take the leap to be vulnerable themselves. Britzman (1991) writes,

thus to begin unraveling all that beckons us requires that we admit how we are implicated, or, how we take on, yet re-infect, the intentions of others as if we were the author, not the bearer, of ideology. Teachers and students are continually trying on narrative identities that attempt to persuade as they are persuaded by relations of power. To think of pedagogy in dialogic ways is to concern ourselves with not just what it means to know and be known, but how we come to know and come to refuse knowledge (p.75).

Vulnerability is essential in teaching (Kelchtermans, 2009) and as Britzman states above, teaching is not just the transmission of information from teacher to student, but the identity of the teacher infiltrates into the presentation of the information. By allowing students to understand why the lesson is being presented in a certain way and how the teachers' prior beliefs and values influence their knowledge, impacts the bond between student and teacher. This bond can be created and maintained through talk. Gallas (1994) discusses the importance of talk by stating that "the classroom should reflect children's connections rather than their separation" (p.14). In my classroom, my priority was creating a culture of kindness by ensuring that all my students felt safe in their environment and empowered to learn. I held weekly discussions with my class to discuss the positive and negative experiences that happened inside and

outside the classroom. For example, I would discuss behaviour in lessons, once when I presented an art lesson that the students were not excited about, I talked about how their reaction hurt my feelings and we discussed how the situation could have been better handled. The lesson would end with a nomination where the students would recognize a member of the class for their act of kindness. In order to implement this activity and ensure that it worked well for my class, there was a level of vulnerability that I expected from my students and myself. I explained how important it was as their teacher to work in a class where there was mutual respect. This created a positive and understanding community in the classroom and reinforced my bond with the students. Gallas (1994) acknowledges that “when each member of the classroom community strives to affirm the importance of all voices, the benefit for every child is much greater” (p.35). Talk reinforced my bond with my students as well as their bond with each other because it was a moment in the week where I could check in with them and helped to increase their self-awareness of their experiences as students.

Britzman’s (1991) research highlights the difficult and messy aspects of teaching, and my experience recognizes the benefits of vulnerability in the classroom. The realness of the experiences is vital to understanding teacher identity. The explicit exploration of professional identity is lacking in current research. Izadinia (2013) comments on the problems that arise when research “presents an idealized picture of findings and leaving the challenges and undesirable outcomes out tend to lead readers to conclude that identity construction in ST’s (student teachers) is a largely simple and straightforward process” (p. 707). It does not benefit teacher identity research to withhold certain information on the reality of teachers. As researchers on the topic, we have the opportunity to provide teachers with a platform to express themselves and reflect on their teaching practices. Britzman’s (1991) work, followed by Gallas (1994) and Kelchtermans (2009) is vital and provides concrete examples for the importance of vulnerability when building relationships between teacher and their students and the influence of personal and professional identity.

3 DISCONTINUITY OF SL TEACHER IDENTITY

The majority of recent research accounts for a poststructuralist view of identity that acknowledges the discontinuous nature of identity as part of the human experience. Identity is defined as “not something one has, but something that develops during one’s whole life” (Beijaard et al, p. 107, 2004) and “complex and dynamic, as it involves a negotiation between person and context” (Pappa et al. 2017, p.82). The discontinuity of identity occurs “daily, in the ways that individuals are positioned by and position themselves in dominant discursive representations of identity” (Burt, 2014, p.36). Moreover, the shift can be further explored as not only constructing and reconstructing daily, but is constantly shifting based on our “thoughts, moods, and behavior on a day-to-day or hour-to hour basis” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p.312). If we accept the poststructuralist notion that identity is in constant flux, we can view identity as a constant questioning of “Who am I at this moment?” (Beijaard et al, 2004, p. 108). Taking into account that identity is an “ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p.122) proves challenging for researchers, because the identity of the participant will have not only changed when the research has been released but is changing while the research is being conducted. Researchers have tackled this challenge, by analysing key moments in a teacher’s life. Ruohotie-Lyhty and Kaikkonen (2009) highlight that the majority of research tends to view the key moments as being the transitional phases in a teacher’s career. The transitional phases discussed predominantly in literature is caused by a change in knowledge or structure (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Kaikkonen p.173) as well as the role of emotion (Zembylas, 2003).

In this section, teacher identity research and SLTI research align as both communities recognize the discontinuity of identity and the role of language is not a focal point. Knowledge, institutional and emotional transitions are universally experienced by all teachers and the following sections outlines these

three key areas of change identified within the existing research literature and their impact on identity.

3.1 Change in Knowledge

Change in knowledge is seen as an instrumental factor in the discontinuity of teacher identity. There is a growing body of literature on the negotiation of new knowledge from pre-service teacher to in-service teacher. The negotiation of knowledge represents the fundamental change in perception that newly qualified teachers face in their first years of teaching (Britzman, 1991, Alsup, 2006, Lanas & Kelchtermans, 2015). Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) highlights how influential the induction phase is on “teachers’ former beliefs about teaching and themselves” (p. 120). In her research, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) comments on how the perception of what constitutes teaching drastically changes when teachers enter the workplace. There is a lack of understanding of what it takes to be a teacher, and this leads to challenges for new teachers. The misunderstanding by teachers is coined as “praxis shock” (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013, p. 121). This phenomenon can otherwise be viewed as a change in knowledge. Teachers enter the workplace, with theories and a basic understanding of how to teach, which does not transfer directly to practice in the classroom. First year teachers are therefore forced to learn ‘as they go’ as situations arise in the classroom. Each day brings new and varied learning experiences for teachers and therefore a change in knowledge is always occurring and leading to new negotiations and shifts in their teacher identity. The change in knowledge can also be targeted back to students entering the teacher education program and their primary reasons for wanting to be teachers. Anspal et al. (2011), explore how student teachers’ perceptions of the teaching profession change as they gain more awareness and knowledge about the teaching as a whole. Lanas and Kelchtermans (2015) explain that teacher education is “not a top down process in which knowledge and perspectives are transmitted from the formal institute to the students, but a process in which student teacher engage with multiple

directions and alternatives” (p.23). It is important to note that the transmission of knowledge is not a linear process, rather it is complex and varied and is viewed as such when researching the change in knowledge occurring for pre-service teachers during teacher education programs.

Knowledge is a powerful tool that is often hard to locate in the stories of our lives. The effect of new knowledge, in university for example or in a classroom is ongoing and becomes the norm so the continual shift in identity is happening almost subconsciously. As a master’s student, working on my first research paper, I am presented with new knowledge on identity daily, which is shifting my perception of self and how I view my teacher identity. I am equipped with more knowledge on the subject and view teaching through a new analytical lens that separates my teacher identity from not only in class practices but now within the sphere of academia.

3.2 Institutional Change

There are different ways in which institutional change affects teacher identity and different opinions on how it should be conceptualised. For example, a change in school culture, curriculum reform, administration change, change at the level of the government etc. all contribute to a shift in identity. Identity negotiation occurs when change is present as “people are expected to take on or reshape their identities” (Kayi-Aydar, 2015, p.138). Change can be seen on a large scale, for example the curriculum reform in Finland or a smaller scale with the introduction of a new teacher in the workplace (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). Day (2002) argues that large-scale educational reforms can “erode teachers’ autonomy and change teachers’ individual and collective professional and personal identities” (p. 678). Day (2002) highlights that educational reform in any country aims to change the way that education is being carried out for various reasons, the last being central to the theme of this thesis “they do not always pay attention to teachers’ identities- arguably central to motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness” (p.679). This

observation recognizes the distinct difference between propositions by the government and what is best for teachers. This implication can lead to negative ramifications on the part of teacher identity as it implies that what is happening now is not beneficial to the future of education and calls into question the “professionalism of the teacher” (Day, 2002, p. 680). In addition, Vähäsantanen and Etläpela (2009) acknowledges that there is an expectation for teachers to be adaptable to change, and a negative connotation for teachers’ who resist an imposed change, often characterized as a “stick-in-the-mud” and “old fashioned” yet neglecting to ask why the teachers’ are resistant to certain change (p.16). They research the implications of educational reform on teacher identities, a limited area in academia. (Vähäsantanen & Etläpela, 2009, p. 19). Their research emphasizes the individuality of each teacher and their perception on the reform from the unique perspective of the teacher. Thus, to generalize how all teachers experience change would be superficial and once again the importance of teacher identity to be seen as individual to each teacher is advantageous. “Reforms have an impact upon teachers’ identities and because these are both cognitive and emotional, create reactions which are both rational and non-rational” (Day, 2002, p. 683), when reforms are occurring, the way in which they are implemented will correlate to the negative or positive effects on teacher identity.

3.3 Emotional Change

As mentioned in the previous section, recent literature has started to focus on the role of emotion. Emotion is a focal point when discussing the dynamisms of identity as it is becoming readily viewed as an instigator for change in teacher identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013, p.173). The elements of teacher identity are interlinked and therefore factors such as emotions are also highly influential in the discontinuous nature of identity. Zembylas (2003) discusses the role of context and emotion on the discontinuity of teacher identity by firstly recognizing that “identity is formed in this shifting space where narratives of

subjectivity meet the narratives of culture.” (p. 221). The shifting space, assumes that by recognizing the influence of context, it is impossible to view identity as stagnant and thus “identities are constantly becoming” (Zembylas, 2003, p.221). Zembylas (2003) reinforces the discontinuity of identity by using the word ‘becoming’, therefore, acknowledging “the incompleteness of identity and a dynamic identity construction, one that involves a non-linear, unstable process (i.e. new features emerge constantly) by which an individual confirms or problematizes who she/he is/becomes” (p.221)”. In other words, identity construction and reconstruction are subconsciously occurring, identity will never remain the same and this is part of the human experience of becoming. The word becoming implies there is no end to the ‘becoming’ as there is no possibility of reaching an ideal identity and remaining the same. Becoming, can be influenced by emotional experience that impacts not only the professional but also the personal construct of identity, and must be negotiated and renegotiated by the self (Zembylas, 2003, p.214). Pappa et al. (2017) explore the role of emotion in an individual's evolution of teacher identity (p. 83) . They describe the necessity to view “emotions as embodied and subjective experiences that are a personal response to the events and contexts the individual engages in” (Pappa et al., 2017, p.82). Emotions have a strong impact in one’s life, especially negative emotions. There is a tendency to research the impact of negative emotions on teacherhood rather than the positives. Pappa et al. (2017) criticize the limited spectrum of emotions present in the majority of research and call for positive emotions to also be recognized (p. 83).

3.4 My Teacher Identity Evolution

I recognize that my teacher identity is shifting currently as I study the topic of teacher identity and I am experiencing a change in knowledge and an emotional change. I am trying to negotiate between my teacher identity and my identity as a master’s student. How I understand teacher identity is based on my own experiences and now with more insight into the literature on teacher identity

research I am forming a new understanding of the concept. For example, the fact that I view teacher identity as discontinuous is influenced by my professional experience of changing my professional contexts, having taught and studied in Canada, France and Finland. The contexts where I have worked and studied are key moments and inspired an “an ongoing process of construction” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 310). The Canadian, French and Finnish contexts has allowed for constant discontinuity of my teacher identity and has shifted my perspective on education and teaching from a narrow outlook to a more global one. The positive emotions that surround international experiences has impacted my future endeavors as a teacher and changed how I want to be perceived in the classroom. In the classroom, I see myself like a butterfly and my students as flowers. I travel and bring the knowledge that I have learned to my students in order to help them grow. I plan to continue to work abroad in order to gain more international experience and share my knowledge with my future students.

4 THE MULTIPLICITY OF SL TEACHER IDENTITY

The multiplicity of identity is widely accepted by teacher identity researchers and SLTI researchers alike (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Norton, 2016), and refers to the idea that identity is not one single entity, but rather comprised of multiple sub-identities (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Herman (2001) discusses the concept of “multivoicedness” (p. 324) drawing from concepts already established by Burke (1980) viewing identity as comprised of identities. To understand this concept, I view identity as a puzzle and sub-identities are the pieces of the puzzle which are representative of the personal and professional aspects of my life. My sub-identities include: teacher, master’s student, Canadian, sister, daughter etc. I have included teacher as my first sub-identity, which is fitting as it answers the purpose of my thesis and reflects my desire to present my credibility as a researcher because of my experience as a teacher.

Despite the general agreement on the multiplicity of identity, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) continue to criticize the ability of the studies to answer the questions: “What makes up a sub-identity? How does it come into existence?” (p. 310). To explore this notion, we can use the concept of I-positions as a point of reference. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) describe an I-position “as a ‘voiced’ position, that is, a speaking personality bringing forward a specific viewpoint and story” (p. 312). Each identity has a different stance (I-position) in different contexts. When we view identity in such terms, we can better understand how multiple identities are negotiated in different circumstances.

4.1 My Sub-Identities

As mentioned above, I view sub-identities as pieces of a puzzle that make up a larger picture- that is my identity as a whole. The puzzle encompasses my entire identity, which includes not only my professional identity as a teacher but also my personal identity as they are interlinked and must work together. The

personal aspect of teacher identity research is vital as Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasize that “most researchers saw professional identity as an ongoing process of integration of the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’ sides of becoming and being a teacher” (p.113) which if neglected can lead to tension between the personal and professional identities (p. 109). In other words, the puzzle pieces can either be a perfect fit or can sometimes come into “conflict” if they are not the right match, similarly to sub-identities which can either work well together or cause tension.

4.2 Conflicting Sub-Identities

The sub-identity “teacher”, is a broad and generic term that cannot be viewed as producing one single “voice”. Teacher identity, must be explored in detail to involve more specified sub-teacher-identities. Leibowitz (2017) laments that SLTI can be viewed as comprised of teacher identities by describing SLTI as “many-layered: one has an identity as an individual onto which is layered an identity as a teacher, and onto that an identity as a language teacher”. For example, a French immersion teacher can have an identity of mother, daughter, sibling as well as the identity of teacher, onto which the additional sub-identities of French immersion teacher and English teacher. My teacher identities include; French immersion teacher in a Canadian context, English as a Second Language teacher in a French context, French as a Second Language teacher in a Finnish context and English as a second language teacher in a Finnish context. I have differentiated my teacher identities based on context and language. My knowledge and use of French influences the way I negotiate between my first language persona and my second language persona which is heavily influenced by context. The teacher identities that encapsulate my teacher identity as a whole do come into conflict. I will focus on my French immersion teacher identity, as I believe this is my dominant sub-teacher-identity. I will begin by presenting two cases: the first being a conflict in teacher identity regarding language and the second concerning the role of context and culture on conflicting sub-identities.

4.2.1 The Role of Language

When I began as a French immersion teacher, my experience with the French language had been exclusively in an educational setting. I was a French immersion student, who then pursued French in university to become a French immersion teacher. My identity with French was isolated as I only used it professionally and with my students at school. I did not feel a sense of belonging to the French culture. Roy (2010) highlights similar feelings among the French immersion students in her study. I felt a conflict between my English identity, where I had a strong sense of belonging and my French identity, which felt superficial. This translated in my teaching. A prime example was my use of humour. Humour is a tool that I use to promote a sense of comradery and a positive environment in the classroom. I was unable to use humour in my French classes the same way I was using humour in my English classes. Moate (2011) explores this phenomenon by identifying pedagogic talk between teacher and student as “highly significant as teachers mediate between the expert community and the classroom community, lowering the ‘entry threshold’ of the one, whilst raising the competence level of the other” (p.28) As a teacher, my ‘entry threshold is by use of humour as a way to “engage pupils in a subject” (Moate, 2011, p.28). This tension inhibited my ‘pedagogic talk’ and I applied to work in France to gain a better understanding of the French culture and the French language. I now feel a greater sense of belonging to French; I immersed myself in the culture and have an appreciation for aspects like French humour that I introduce to my students. Although the humour from France does not always translate with my Canadian students, I feel much more authentic in my teaching and with my language skills having taught and lived in France. The role of language and culture is a focal point in the conflict between my teacher identities. The negotiation between my English and French self is apparent in my conflicting teacher identities because of the comparison that I was continuously making between both sub-teacher-identities. I viewed my French identity as being dormant and living in France

ignited a part of myself which helped me view both my French self and English self as being individual in nature and both valuable to my identity as a whole.

4.2.2 The Role of Context

I was able to understand the conflict between my sub-identities as a Canadian teacher teaching in a French context where the role of the teacher differed. My teaching philosophy that I equate to growing up and studying in the Canadian educational system is to act as a guide and facilitate the learning of my students. I view teaching as a collaboration between student and teacher where the learning occurs on both sides and is mutually beneficial. In France, the expectation as a teacher was to be authoritarian. In this case, the tension was caused contextually by the difference in educational systems between France and Canada and the expectation of the teacher. There was tension between who I am as a teacher and who I was expected to be in the French context. As Akkerman and Meijer (2011) observe:

This reflects the struggles of being one and being many at the same time. A way to come to an understanding of this complexity is to look more carefully at the doubts, dilemmas, and uncertainties that teachers experience, implicitly within their normal work routines, or perhaps more explicitly when faced by educational innovations or career transitions" (p.318).

Pappa et al. (2017) argue that positive emotions are just as valuable as the negative ones, and an exploration of emotions should not only be acknowledged when negative emotions towards teaching arise (p.95). The negativity and tension that I experienced, stemmed from a classroom climate and disciplinary system that I was not familiar with. My role in the classroom was as an assistant English teacher. This new current role and title as "assistant" created conflict between my present designation which required less responsibility and my past role as a teacher responsible for discipline and classroom climate. Conflicting sub-identities provide the researcher with 'sore points' (Sullivan, 2012) indicative of the I-positions that each sub-identity represents. It is in these moments, that the true essence of each puzzle piece (sub-identity) is revealed and to understand the reasoning behind the stance is essential to relieving the tension and creating new space for the sub-identities to shift and/or grow.

4.2.3 Research on Conflicting Sub-Identities

Conflict between sub-identities allows for a greater sense of self awareness and it is for this reason that tension within identity is a recurring theme in research. Norton (2016), researches the negotiation between an “imagined identity” that affects a teacher’s motivation for language learning as well as professional development in the classroom (p. 477). Kayi-Aydar (2015) explains, “Identity negotiation occurs when people are expected to take on or reshape their identities” (p. 138). The negotiation between sub-identities can interact cohesively or be a source of tension or ‘sore point’. Beijaard et al. (2004) argue that “it is essential for a teacher that these sub-identities do not conflict, i.e. that they are well balanced” (p. 122). But, as more recent research shows (Alsup, 2006; Janzen, 2014; Lanas & Kelchtermans, 2015) conflict between different I-positions is inevitable and can lead to better understanding of teacher identity when faced with problems at work (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Kayi-Aydar (2015) acknowledges that “when negotiation is successful, people may form new identities or (re)construct their existing selves” (p.138). The most frequent research area that addresses tension caused by sub-teacher-identities is on pre-service teachers and in-service teachers (Britzman, 1998; Alsup, 2006; Lanas & Kelchtermans, 2015). Teachers must negotiate between the authoritarian position that is now expected of them as a teacher and the more passive position as a student. The transitional period between pre-service and in-service teaching also reflects the “imagined identities” previously mentioned by Norton (2016). Teachers must navigate between their expectations of themselves as teachers and their current reality in the teaching profession.

4.3 Emotion as a View into Identity

Pappa et al. (2017) develop the concept of sub-identities by exploring different types of sub-identities and defining them as “related to teachers’ different settings and relationships” (p.82). In their research, they discuss the power of emotions in identity and how strong emotions can trigger a facet of identity that

would otherwise remain dormant (Pappa et al., 2017, p.95). In other words, when teachers are faced with a situation where their emotions are heightened, a sub-identity that is rarely used will overpower recurring ones. For example, one participant in Pappa et al's (2017) research reports "feeling angry with timetable management and subsequently guilty for acting out of character" (p. 88). This example alludes to the idea that the participant is usually calm as they depict being angry out of the ordinary. The participant's feeling of guilt represents the tension that she feels between her more readily used sub-identities versus the dormant one. Janzen (2014), explores the role of emotion, with another analytical lens, aiming to recognize the tension that arises between the "phantasy of a teacher" as she describes, "the ways in which the teaching subject may desire to be a teacher" (p.123) versus the reality of being a teacher. Throughout Janzen's study, frustration is expressed by many of the participants because of the lack of freedom within the curriculum. Participants in the study expressed a feeling of constraint by the curriculum that was inhibiting their performance and feelings towards the teaching profession. The imagined identity versus the reality is constantly being negotiated during their discourse. Janzen accurately depicts the frustration and negotiation of the sub-identities in the title of her article "Free yourself sister", a comment that was made by one of the participants regarding the constraints another teacher was feeling caused by the demanding curriculum. Janzen's (2014) "phantasy of a teacher" aligns with Norton's (2016) "imagined identities", as made up sub-identities based on preconceived notions of teacherhood. This raises an interesting layer of teacher identity research as sub-identities are not always tangible and imagined identities can create as much tension as 'real' sub-identities.

The conflict between my imagined self and my reality as teacher was something I experienced while I was working. I resonated with the stories from the participants in Janzen's research, because I also felt tremendous pressure to finish the entire curriculum. Janzen eloquently describes this as "teachers are caught in a tug of war between what they are supposed to be and who they are trying to become" (p.117). I was supposed to be knowledgeable in all areas of

the curriculum and have exciting and innovative lessons every day to share with my class, I felt inadequate as a teacher because I was not able to be the teacher that the curriculum required.

Emotion is a powerful tool in an individual's life and becoming increasingly important in identity research. SLTI research, explores the additional level of language that causes a new set of challenges and emotions faced by teachers. Pappa et al. (2017) highlight how some of the teachers in the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) program express vulnerability teaching in a second language and view their language skills as subpar (p.88). A few of the teachers also express feeling different when teaching in English versus teaching in Finnish. These sentiments and comparisons based on language skill and knowledge are simply not possible when conducting a study solely on teacher identity.

Exploration of emotion provides teachers with a sense of the reality of teaching and humanizes teachers and the teaching profession (Alsup, 2006). Hearing real stories and finding commonalities between my own story and the stories of the participants in the studies have provided me with an even greater sense of self-awareness and add to my research toolkit by identifying common experiences such as the role of language, context and emotions felt by all teachers that allow identity researchers to concretely represent the abstract theory of teacher identity.

5 SUMMARY OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY

The notion of identity itself is fluid and ever changing. It is impossible to define identity in blanket terms. Viewing identity as fixed contradicts the nature of identity and hinders future research (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 3). Indeed,

Different theoretical perspectives inform different understandings and uses of identity- poststructuralist, sociocultural and dialogic theories, communities of practice, social identity theory- some more fashionable than others at different paradigmatic moments in time. But I am concerned with what it means to *me*. (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 2)

I acknowledge that this truth and level of uncertainty pertaining to identity research will always be present and allows researchers to personalize their understanding to align with the goal of their research. For example, as a French immersion teacher, I bring the knowledge of my own teacher identity as a basis for understanding the notion of teacher identity and SLTI in academia.

As discussed in the previous section, there are many ways to define teacher identity and SLTI. The definitions are all-valid as they represent how the researcher views teacher identity for him/herself. Despite the increase in research on teacher identity and more recently SLTI, Beijaard et al. (2004) and Akkerman & Meijer (2011) highlight the need for researchers to clearly define their conceptualization of teacher identity in order to better understand the lens used for their research. They argue that without insight into how teacher identity is defined by the researcher, the results of the study lack substance and depth. I have used this call for action as a starting point for my research by building a clear theoretical framework that will be present throughout the study.

To summarize, I view teacher identity as being social in nature: highly affected by relationships at the macro, meso and micro level, discontinuous: continuously evolving and multiple: comprised of many smaller sub-identities that make up identity as a whole.

In addition to drawing on existing theorisations I am also aware that language is likely to be a crucial part of French immersion teachers' identities, although there is limited research on how language is constructed within SLTI.

In order to explore the French immersion teacher identity and the role of language on identity I will conduct interviews with French immersion teachers in Alberta, Canada and guide my research with the following three questions:

1. How is the social nature of teacher identity present in the narratives of the French immersion teachers?
2. How is the discontinuity of teacher identity present in the narratives of the French immersion teachers?
3. How is the multiplicity of teacher identity present in the narratives of the French immersion teacher?

The research questions are closely related to the theoretical framework as they exemplify the already established definitions of teacher identity. This study answers two aspects of teacher identity research, the first defining teacher identity and SLTI based on literature and my conceptualization of the concept. The second, using this theoretical lens to study the narratives of French immersion teachers and create a platform for their voices to be heard. This thesis will contribute to a growing body of work on immersion teachers in Canada.

6 CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

Canada is divided into ten provinces and three territories. Educational decisions are made by the provincial and territorial governments to benefit the needs of the students in that specific area. The presence of French and English in Canada dates back to the history with Britain and France (Horner & Weber, 2017, p.124).

The idea of French immersion was first developed in 1965 in St-Lambert, Quebec and implemented in Alberta, Canada in 1970 (Alberta Education, 2014). It was a program initiated by parents for their children. There was a growing demand for Canadians to become bilingual, and parents were dissatisfied with the quality of language education their children were receiving. As well as “to provide opportunities for Anglophone students to learn French and to understand the Francophone culture.” (Roy, 2010, p.549). The more recent goal of the program according to the Principles and Practice Handbook for French Immersion Administrators Alberta Education, Canada, (2014) is to create a conducive learning environment for students to learn French and become “functionally fluent in French by the end of grade 12” (p.1). The aim of the program is to encourage students to pursue their bilingual studies after graduation and be able to use French and English in a personal and professional context (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 1). Horner and Weber (2017) highlight that “what most students seem to share was a belief in French as a means of social advancement in Canadian society” (p.125). Since the implementation of the program, there have been many studies that suggest the benefits of learning a second language for students (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 7). The studies on the benefits of French immersion all neglect to mention the role of the teacher on the success of the program and the success of the student. The Alberta handbook presents what the ideal French immersion teacher candidate should have in terms of language skills but, there is no mention of who the teachers are? What stories do they have to share? How do they view their role in the classroom? Below are the impersonal requirements that all teachers ‘must have’.

1. native or native-like fluency in both oral and written French;

2. training in and a good understanding of immersion methodology;
3. an understanding of French culture and its relationship to language; and
4. the ability to communicate in English (p.15)

Alberta Education paints an idealized view of the French immersion program and does not mention the challenges and difficulties that arise with such a demanding education program. Domke (2015) argues that “the sheer magnitude of types of immersion programs and the ways in which they conceptualize content and language instruction makes immersion education a complex endeavor” (p. 50). The complexity of French immersions on teachers and how this affects their identity is not addressed enough in research. “The idea of immersion in a second language has persisted as teachers have continued to struggle with explicitly teaching language through content” (Domke, 2015, p. 51).

Roy (2010) and Domke (2015) use a more critical lens to analyse the program and the research in the realm of immersion teaching. Roy (2010) recognizes that there is a limited amount of research that “have discussed how bilingualism and linguistic identities are constructed from historical, social, and political discourses, and how French immersion students’ view of themselves relates to these discourses” (p. 543). Roy (2010) also argues for the importance of “a study of bilingualism and linguistic identities requires an examination of the micro dynamics of languages, which will facilitate an understanding of their macro realities” (p.544-545). This study acts as a starting point to encourage more research on French immersion teacher identity.

7 METHODOLOGY

My research explores the identities of four French immersion teachers in Alberta, Canada. The teachers currently live in Alberta and have completed their education degree at the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary. Three of the participants have taught exclusively in Alberta and one participant has taught in British Columbia. They have all graduated high school following the Alberta curriculum. The participants are all women, which is the reality in elementary teaching in Canadian schools with 84% being female teachers at the elementary level according to Statistics Canada (2011). The experience of the teachers varies from 4 years to 24 years.

7.1 Ethical Considerations

The data was collected using a voice recording device. The names of the participants were not used during the interview and pseudonyms were given to each participant to preserve their anonymity. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process, as I protected the files and did not share the information with others. The participants were contacted via email to take part in the study three months prior to the interview. To obtain authentic stories, the aim of the study was presented in general rather than specific terms at the time of the interview and the participants were aware that the main topic was French immersion teacher identity.

7.2 Data Collection Procedure

A qualitative study provides “opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing.” (Tracy, 2013, p. 132). My choice to conduct a qualitative study, is reflective of my research objectives. My aim is to create a platform that provides French immersion teachers a voice by co-constructing

their teacher identities using their stories and my interpretation of their narratives.

7.2.1 Selection of Participants

The participants were selected based on my prior knowledge of the individuals professionally and personally inside and outside the classroom. The four participants were chosen based on their willingness to participate as well as teachers who I believed had a level of self-awareness that was essential for my data analysis. I wanted to present real and honest stories, therefore a level of comfort between researcher (myself) and the teacher was necessary to answer the purpose of the study. The comfortable and relaxed atmosphere of the interview allowed for in depth reflection and vulnerability on the part of the teachers. Below is a description of each of the participants.

Margaret

Margaret is an elementary school teacher and has taught for 8 years. Margaret was born in Alberta and has two anglophone parents. She learned French when she was 8 years old. She describes her mother as being very influential and, that her mother thought “the chance to have her kids learn a second language for free in public education, was too good to be passed up”. She describes her parents as always valuing education, and her mother especially valuing learning a second language, although she did not speak French, she helped provide books and resources necessary for Margaret to succeed in French.

Margaret began school in a small town. She explains that the school was mostly English, apart from the one class that she belonged to, that was French immersion. She states that as she “got older, it [speaking French] definitely got like a stigma”. She says that this affected her desire to learn French and refers to her elementary and high school French as something that was imposed on her. By the end of high school, Margaret admits to not being a functioning bilingual, yet decides to pursue French in University.

Margaret pursued both a French and Spanish degree at the university level, as she was finishing her language degree, she started to think “well, what else? What now”. One of her friends from her Spanish program was going into education and encouraged her to do the same.

Margaret’s decision to become a French immersion teacher was influenced by the suggestion of a friend, but now after 8 years of experience she has a passion for French immersion teaching and promotes bilingualism in Canada. She has a fun and enthusiastic energy and prides herself on the strong bonds that she creates with her students. As a French immersion student herself she can often relate to the challenges that her students are facing and there is a sense of mutual respect between her and her students.

Evelyn

Evelyn has just retired from being a French immersion teacher and is the most experienced participant in the study. She has taught for 24 years in Alberta and British Columbia. Her father has a French background, his mother was Belgian, and his first language was French. Evelyn says there was always a little French presence in the house and that her father had taught her a handful of words and would point out the French side of things when they were living in Canada. She describes loving the idea of knowing another language and viewing French as a “*little bit of a mystery* this opposite side of the container that would have some French”. She recognizes that even as a child, she could see that there was a mandate in Canada that regulated that all products be labelled in French and English and she was curious to know more. Evelyn idealizes knowing French, she describes it romantically as being a mystery and once she heard it “falling” for the language.

Evelyn has lived and studied in different countries and around the province of Alberta. Her desire to become a French immersion teacher stemmed from the necessity to find a job. She had read an article, where the journalist predicted

that there would be a shortage of French immersion teachers in the future, and she saw a teaching degree as opening many job opportunities for her.

Evelyn hopes to be an inspiration for her students by showing them French culture like poetry and introducing them to the international language of French.

Evelyn describes knowing a second language as “a tool to get the great many things done, to increase your ability to understand the world around you. Like I say to my students, you can watch twice as much tv if you can understand the French channel.”

Sophie

Sophie is an elementary school teacher in Alberta and has taught for 4 years. Sophie was born in Montreal and has two bilingual parents. She describes her parents as playing the most influential roles in her language learning as they had made an active decision to enroll Sophie in a French school, as well as encouraged and supported her language learning as a student.

She was surrounded by French growing up in a bilingual city but started her formal education in French at the age of 5 when she began kindergarten. She admits that growing up in a bilingual city, was challenging because she was constantly hearing different accents and vocabulary but that her parents helped her navigate between the cultural differences. Her decision to learn French was her parent’s choice and when they moved to Alberta, they decided to continue her studies in the French immersion program. Sophie admits that French learning was out of her control and mostly situational as well as heavily influenced by her parents.

Sophie has mostly taught kindergarten and describes teaching French immersion for this age group as being “pretty cool” because she loves to know she is teaching the students something they are not learning at home with their parents. Also, she finds that she can pinpoint language strengths in her students

in a way that she would not be able to, if she was teaching English to native English speakers.

Sophie describes herself as a model and a guide of the French language for her students and her classroom is a space where the learning is centered around the students.

Isabelle

Isabelle is an elementary school teacher and has taught for 4 years. She grew up in a French and English household. She is half French on her father's side and spent her summers in France with her grandparents, aunts and uncles. Her mother also speaks French and has French roots in Canada. Both her parents are French immersion teachers, and the French culture was present in their household.

She began learning French in school at the age of 5 and continued in French immersion until the end of high school where she graduated with a bilingual diploma. She describes herself as a typical French student, where "learning French was cool until grade 3". After grade 3, she explains that learning French was something that felt forced rather than something she was interested in doing. This feeling began to change in grade 10, when Isabelle recognized that speaking French would be a useful skill in the future and started to feel more connected to the French culture.

Isabelle identifies as an Anglophone who speaks French as a second language. She does not view herself as bilingual in both English and French. Her interpretation of bilingualism is complete proficiency in both English and French. She describes speaking in English as being "her most comfortable self" and this contributes to her feeling of inadequacy in French. Her feelings surrounding her French language identity can be influenced by her French heritage. She has grown up with native French speakers in her family which has formed her conceptualization of a French speaker. Isabelle feels that her level of French is less than that of a native French speaker and therefore does not feel as authentic in the language.

She describes her journey towards becoming a French immersion teacher as “not one defining moment, where she thought “oh yes, this is what I want to do with my life”. She views her role as a teacher as a guiding light. She has a desire to inspire her students and she is “always looking for new activities, the new ways to bring French into the classroom, new ways to inspire” and how “language makes [her] more inspired, having some experience and seeing what is possible when you’re teaching a second language”.

7.2.2 Interview Method

Interviews were chosen as the method for data collection as discourse plays an integral role in identity research. The interviews draw on some elements of the feminist approach where the interviewer’s voice is present, albeit does not play an active role in the dialogue. The interviews were semi-structured with specific questions for each participant. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants the freedom to divert from the questions when they were inspired. The interviews were conducted bearing in mind that “good interviewing is more than just asking good questions- it is creating a logistically feasible and comfortable interaction that will encourage engaging, honest and fun dialogue” (Tracy, 2013, p. 159).

The questions asked, reflect the aim of the study as well as the participants knowledge and expertise in the field. I divided the interview questions into four sections, in order to showcase a holistic view of each participant and represent their past, present and future teacher identities. I replicated some of the interview questions from the research conducted by Tedick and Walker (2000) on immersion teachers in the United States. The interview questions encouraged the participants to explore and negotiate between their views on the French immersion program, their past experience as second language learners, their present representations of themselves as teachers as well as their future hopes and aims for the French immersion program as well as their professional endeavors. The nature of the questions allowed room for the participants to highlight their identities through the experiences they shared. Open ended

questions were vital to encourage the participants to engage in a dialogue, mostly with themselves and their different sub-identities. The participants offered counter arguments and stories that supported or conflicted with their stories and led to more enriching and thought-provoking answers.

Three of the interviews were conducted in the teachers' homes and one was conducted in a familiar public place. The participants were all asked the same 30 questions and the interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes.

7.2.3 My Influence as Researcher

My role as an interviewer was to create a comfortable and relaxed environment for the participants. As mentioned above, drawing on elements of the feminist approach, I engaged in the discourse to ask for clarification on certain topics when needed, but mostly to listen while the participants shared their stories. My goal was to allow the participants the space to share their thoughts, experiences and beliefs in the form of stories. Stories are a powerful tool as they "frame the way participants understand the world, delimiting opportunities and constraints for action" (Tracy, 2013, p. 132). The use of stories will be further explored in the following section using narratives as my method of data analysis.

Tracy (2013) highlights that "self-reflexive interviewers consider how their subject positions might impact the interviewing process and its results" (p. 133). When I self-reflect on my role as the interviewer I acknowledge that my relationship with the participants outside of the study affects the stories they chose to share and how they present themselves. The personal relationship I have with the participants is beneficial for the aim of my study as I have already established a level of mutual respect and trust with each teacher that aligns with my notion of 'good interviewing practices'.

7.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Narratives allow participants to share their stories, which they use as a point of reference to reflect and negotiate between their past, present and future

experiences that explain who they were, who they are and who they would like to become (Holstein & Gubrium, 2015). Through storytelling, participants provide an honest and holistic representation of their identity, by explaining several aspects that influence their way of being in certain situations. Bruner (1991) argues that:

we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery and by his conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors." (p.4).

The act of storytelling is personal by nature and therefore allows for research to take a more in depth look into the identity of an individual. The simple act of a participant being heard reinforces the bond that sharing a story creates between researcher and participant. Zembylas (2007) explains the benefits of using a narrative approach by stating that "it is empowering in the sense that it will allow the construction of teacher identities that teachers themselves might experience as unique, relevant and meaningful." (p.544). He argues that "to understand why teachers present themselves in certain ways, it is therefore necessary to understand how they construct their narratives and narrative identities." (Zembylas, 2007, p.545).

The aim of my study is to provide French immersion teachers in Alberta, Canada the platform to share their identities and who they are as teachers and as people. Narrative analysis enables my research to use the personal approach necessary to gain a better understanding of each participant holistically and as individuals which recognizes the power and importance of their stories.

Narrative analysis accounts for the fact that the way some individuals wish to share a story is representative of the way in which they hope to be perceived. Narrative analysis does not assume that all stories told by the participants are true, and in fact recognize that "memory is selective, we remember what "we can" and some events are deliberately or unconsciously forgotten. In this perspective, the important thing is that the person recorded in his/ her history, what he/she experienced, what is real to her/ him and not the facts themselves (past versus history)". (Muylaert et al., 2014, p.186)

7.3.1 Epistemology versus Ontology or Both?

Narrative analysis can be viewed in both the epistemology and ontology research realms (Dickinson, 2012). Hatch (2002) defines ontology as “what is the nature of reality” and epistemology as “what can be known, and what is the relationship of the knower to what is to be known?” (p.11). Dickinson (2012) explores both these beliefs as included within the “narrative paradigm” (p.83). Somers and Gibson (1993) define the evolution of narrative research from a representational narrative which has predominantly been used in historical research to ontological narrativity which is represented in social science research. Ontological narratives “are the stories we tell in an effort to make sense of how we experience ourselves and how we would like to be understood in order to bring structure to our personal lives (Søreide, 2006, p.529). Somers and Gibson recognize that “social life itself is *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*” (1993, p.2 italics in original). The interpretation and analysis of narratives leads to the creation of multiple identities, Søreide (2006) explains that “these identity constructions are not to be understood as ready-made and sharply defined identities, but rather as more flexible ‘clusters’, which construct and are constructed by the relevant subject positions the teachers relate to in the interviews.” (p. 536). This aligns with my view of identity as involving multiple identities, discontinuous and social in nature by reinforcing that the identity presented is not stagnant, but rather fixed in that moment of dialogue and influenced by the environment and social interactions of the participants. Somers and Gibson (1993) argue that the social nature and theory cannot be separated in narrative research as they “accept that some notion of social being and social identity is, willy-nilly, incorporated into each and every knowledge statement about action, agency and behavior” (p.4). Therefore, narrative analysis as highlighted by Dickinson (2012) encompasses both epistemology and ontology elements that align with my view of narrative analysis research.

7.3.2 Post-structuralist Movement

Narrative theory has shifted from being considered as a fixed moment that has a beginning, middle and end to now more holistic post-structuralist view that allows the character of the “story” to play an active role in the narrative by creating a cohesive identity through experience and sense-making (Aylett, 2006). The post structuralist movement is especially important when discussing second language teachers as expressing the belief “that meanings are produced, and realities are created through language” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p.79).

7.3.3 Dialogic Narrative Analysis

I will use a narrative approach that aligns with Hermans (2001) view of narration as happening within the person as well as authored by the listener of the narrative. He acknowledges that through discourse, individuals are able to structure their identities and present their self-narrative cohesively by organizing their past, present and future experiences and explaining how they negotiate and re-negotiate through those experiences. In a more recent article on narrative analysis, Holstein and Gubrium (2015) explore dialogical narrative analysis that “understands stories as artful representations of lives; stories reshape the past and imaginatively project the future” (p.2). Kayi-Aydar (2015) highlights that teachers who are able to reflect on their professional future, have a better sense of identity in the classroom.

The concept of ‘author’ is seen in Akkerman and Meijer’s (2011) work as they recognize that “identity can be considered as a narrative about ourselves: ‘I’ as an ‘author’ of a play or novel about ‘me’, with myself as an actor or character in it.” (p. 313). In addition, narration can occur by “authoring”, in the case of interviews and research, the researcher can be viewed as authoring the story of the participant using their personal experiences and knowledge. Throughout the process of narrative analysis, the researcher plays an active role in the dialogue, interpreting what has been said and how it is being said, as well as analysing how identity is being created through the stories.

7.3.4 Analysis Steps

Analysing and interpreting the data required a level of understanding of the participants on a personal level as teachers and as individuals. As I was already familiar with the teacher participants, this enabled me to understand their stories to present a holistic and accurate portrayal of their teacher identity. Nevertheless, to gain a more profound understanding of their SLTI in relation to the way in which teacher identity has been theorised, I followed a number of analytical steps.

During the interview, I made note of interesting ideas that the participants mentioned. This served as the basis for my data analysis procedure. A main focus throughout the stage of analysis was highlighting metaphors the teachers shared. Previous research using a dialogic approach, emphasized the power of metaphors as they act as a tool that allow for deeper reflection (Alsup, 2006). I looked for comparisons in the transcripts. For example, Isabelle says “as a teacher it’s almost like being a gymnast and being so flexible that you can tweak your content so that everyone can access it almost equally, I say almost to the best of your ability and feel like they are able to succeed in it.” Using this citation, I was able to understand that one of Isabelle’s sub-identities was a ‘gymnast’ because as a teacher she sees the need to be flexible to meet the needs of all her students. The following table presents a step by step outline of the data analysis procedure.

TABLE 1.

1	Notes were taken during the interviews
2	The interviews were recorded on my phone
3	I listened to the interviews once through
4	I transcribed the interview
5	Listened and read the transcription
6	Highlighted interesting elements (interpretative analysis)

7	Built narratives for each participant and using their voice and my voice co-constructed their identity
8	Used the narratives to divide the citations into the three elements of teacher identity: The Social Nature, the Discontinuity and the Multiplicity.
9	Revisited the quotes and used the ones that were strongest and representative of their identities.

Constructing identity is an interesting aspect of research that allows active participation from the researcher and the participants. A willingness to share and an open environment is essential to encourage vulnerability that leads to more detailed and varied portrayals of identity.

My main goal as a researcher was to create a safe and open environment where the teachers could express themselves freely. Throughout the analysis, I was aware of my influence in co-constructing the teacher identity of my participants, this awareness allowed me to gain perspective when I believed that my own experience or preconceived notions infiltrated too heavily into the identities of the participants. Although the teachers and I all share a common identity of French immersion teacher, it was vital that the individuality of the teachers was maintained throughout the analysis and when presenting the findings. The following section outlines how the commonalities and differences are presented in the narratives in response to the three research questions of social nature of SL teacher identity, discontinuity of SL teacher identity and the multiplicity of SL teacher identity.

FINDINGS

This section will use examples from the narratives of the participants to exemplify their teacher identity and provide an honest depiction of the commonalities and individual nature of identity. I begin by exploring how the social nature of identity is present in the teachers' narratives, secondly how the discontinuity of identity is present in the teachers' narratives and finally how multiplicity is present in the teachers' narratives. The chronology of the questions is important to note as it represents the layers of teacher identity. The first layer recognizes the important relationships in the lives of the teachers that acts as the foundation of their identity and highlights the reasoning for their becoming and continuing as French immersion teachers. The second layer exemplifies the discontinuity of identity by acknowledging that identity evolves through a change in knowledge and emotional change. The final layer represents the multiplicity of identity, which is the most intricate facet of identity and exemplifies the nuances within teacher identity as a whole.

7.4 How the Social Nature of Identity is Present in the Teachers' Narratives

The social nature of identity is a powerful element that contributes to the moulding of teacher identity. The stories told, were detailed and there was a genuine sense of emotion tied to the relationships formed throughout the childhood of the participants as French immersion learners to becoming French immersion teachers. This section will serve as the grounds for establishing the teacher identities of the participants and will be divided into three parts (macro, meso and micro).

7.4.1 Presence at the Macro Level

Influence of the Government

Resources are provided by the government of Alberta as a tool to help facilitate learning and support teaching. Resources are decided and handled at the provincial level. Each teacher discussed the lack of resources as hindering their abilities to teach and as a source of frustration in their narratives. There is a sense of hostility from the participants in terms of the amount of money allocated to the French immersion program. The most common challenge described by all the participants is the lack of resources for French immersion teachers.

Evelyn has the most experience as a French immersion teacher and explains how she has noticed a shift in the recognition of the French immersion program. Evelyn offers this unique perspective on the shift of the role of the government in French immersion:

Okay, now this is where it gets interesting. And again, a little historical perspective. There was a time when that [professional development] was a priority for schools. When I was teaching, there were thousands of dollars available for school wide development and it was not uncommon for us. The entire staff right down to the aids, to go to [a bigger city] for two days because something was going on there. But anyways, there well everything comes down to money and professional development costs money and so the people whereas in the past it seems to me there was money allotted for language arts and money allotted for math and money allotted for um social skill development. It doesn't seem to be like that anymore.

In this statement, Evelyn acknowledges that there is less money being allocated to professional development not only language teacher development, but all subjects. This indicates a lack of support from the provincial government to promote the development of their teachers. The lack of support for French immersion teachers is also present in Isabelle's narrative where she highlights the shortage of books for her students that are at reading level and age level. She says: "Let's say something that is very popular I'd be hard pressed to find that in French". She says that the books that are available are translated directly from English and often have words that are too complicated for her grade one students and that the lack of resources "kind of limits what you can do in the classroom".

Similarly, to Isabelle, Sophie states that it is much harder to find activities, ideas and lesson plans that are made for her French immersion kindergarten students. She explains that it is not even possible to compare an English kindergarten class to a French immersion kindergarten class in Canada because the students are learning differently and if she does find something online she

has to spend extra time making the activity level appropriate for her students. She provides an example:

Like I know the big thing in English kindergarten classes is storytelling right now, but how can you story tell, when you don't even know how to speak in French, so I think that's hard when these experts and strategists are telling you to implement things in your classroom and they come in and they don't speak French and they find kind of some things you're doing more traditional or like you know just outdated but you're just trying to teach a language so you're not able to do all the things that English teachers can, so I think that can be tricky.

Evelyn, Isabelle and Sophie discuss the lack of resources for French immersion teachers and students and notice the difference between the resources that they receive, and the resources English teachers receive. There is a sense of feeling unheard and undervalued due to the lack of resources. The government makes an assumption that either the resources are appropriate for French immersion students, although the participants have stated that in most cases the language is too difficult, or the government assumes that French immersion teachers will do the extra work in order to alter the activities to fit the needs of their students. In both cases, there is a clear sense of misunderstanding between the French immersion teachers and the government.

Influence of the Curriculum

Margaret is the only participant that mentions the impact of the curriculum on her teaching practice. She talks about the curriculum hindering her freedom to teach the way that she believes is best for her students:

I think the role of the teacher is way different because you cannot be talking to your kids all day like that then like you need to plan everything differently so it's all about them speaking and whatever but of course we're also hindered by the curriculum and whatever so it's also like how can I just let them talk all day and still make sure they learn about why wetlands are important in science and what we can do about them and whatever.

She describes the curriculum as being traditional where the learning is centred on the teacher instead of how Margaret views teaching as centered on the learner making their own discoveries. She describes the Albertan curriculum as follows:

The curricula are old so there's a certain element of like stand in teaching where I have to tell the kids all this or like I don't give them an opportunity to learn about this but it's largely through like listening or reading so where can we get those like other oral activities.

Margaret expresses the need for the provincial education department to understand that the French immersion program is a different program to the English stream program and to offer a curriculum that reflects the needs of her French immersion students. She explains:

Curriculums need to change to make that work and with like all the curriculum like French um science, social and math are just the English curriculum like the English curriculum translated should we have a different curriculum because it's French immersion science. Like should it be more oral focused to like able to be presented in a way that's like more oral focus like.

Margaret views the curriculum as hindering her abilities to teach because it does not meet her needs as a French immersion teacher and is not representative of the expectations that she has for her students. She has the desire to focus on the oral component of French language learning, yet because this is not a focal point in the curriculum feels that she is restricted. Her level of frustration with the curriculum could also be indicative of her perceived value as a French immersion teacher by the provincial government, as she has ideas and knowledge about the French immersion program but does not have a platform to share them.

7.4.2 Presence at the Meso Level

The findings from the meso level of the social nature of identity are divided into two parts based on the narratives of the participants. The first part presents how family and past teachers have influenced the teachers' identities. This part represents the starting point of each participants French immersion journey because in all four cases, the decision to learn and pursue French began with their family. The second section will showcase the influential characters in the current lives of the teachers within the school. These key characters are the administrators and colleagues.

Influence of Parents

In Evelyn's narrative, she explains that her father's culture and history as a French speaker influences her passion to continue French despite the obstacles that she encounters as a French learner:

There was always a little sort of a French presence in our house with you know a handful of words, the beginnings of that were just my dad sort of pointing out the French side on the cereal box or just the awareness that there was this other language called French.

Evelyn's first introduction to French was from her father who had a French background. Similarly, to Isabelle's background where both her parents have French roots. Isabelle was immersed in the language at a young age, and spent many summers in France with her grandparents, aunts and uncles. This influenced her sense of belonging to the French culture. She describes French culture as "that is who I am, that is where I come from" and describes her relationship to the language as being strong. Speaking French and having French roots gives her a sense of pride and connection to the French culture. Isabelle's strong sense of connection with her parent's history was an instigator that led her to become a French immersion teacher. There was a sense of responsibility and excitement to share French with others.

It's in part because that's who I am and that is my family's culture. That's where I am from. That's where a part of me comes from. I think that if I had not learned French, and not been inspired by my teachers and my parents and my family, I probably wouldn't feel the way that I feel about France today that I do because I just love it and I feel so connected to that place, but you know if someone had said ah French whatever let's move on who knows? I probably would have a very different relationship to the language

In this statement, Isabelle expresses her gratitude for her parents and family as she views them as inspirations to continue to learn French and as her motivator as a French language learner. She reflects back on herself as a French immersion student where French became "uncool" as she entered junior high. The role that her parents and family played in maintaining her perception of French despite the social pressures she faced at school by her peers is apparent in her narrative. The French culture, to which she feels connected to, is at the forefront of her identity as a French immersion teacher.

Margaret does not have French roots in her family as both her parents are anglophones. Although, she discusses the influence of her mother as a French immersion learner. She describes her mother as being very influential and, that her mother thought "the chance to have her kids learn a second language for free in public education, was too good to be passed up". She describes her parents as

always valuing education, and her mother especially valuing learning a second language.

My mom was always like school is your job, and she really made an effort, she would drive like we didn't have a lot of money, but she would drive to the French bookstore with one of my two sisters and buy us French books, which were expensive, and she definitely encouraged us to work hard in that.

Margaret recounts a story, when her parents first told her she was going to learn French, she explains that it is ingrained in her memory:

So, I remember my mom telling me that I was going to learn French, and I had this one distinct memory of being in their bedroom, walking along the edge of their water bedframe and imagining what French was. I didn't understand the concept of a different language. But she [her mom] was trying to explain to me like the words sound different and whatever and I was trying to pretend, making up gibberish in French so I was excited about it and I thought it was like this cool thing. That was my parents' choice, my mom, like French immersion was a new program back then in Canada, newer and she wanted to, she thought about it a lot but just the chance to have her kids learn a second language for free in public education she thought was like too good to be passed up.

Margaret highlights that it was her parents' choice to enroll her in a French immersion program and therefore are at the root of her French immersion identity.

Sophie on the other hand, represents a mixture of having both English and French roots. She has two bilingual parents and describes her parents as playing the most influential role in her language learning as they enrolled Sophie in a French school, as well as encouraged and supported her language learning as a student.

She was surrounded by French growing up in a bilingual city but started her formal education in French at the age of 5 when she started kindergarten. She admits that growing up in a bilingual city, was challenging because she was constantly hearing different accents and vocabulary but that her parents helped her understand the nuances of the French accents and vocabulary by saying:

So they were always able to help me and then my teachers for sure and as I got older, hearing the different French, you started to understand the different kind of vocab but also accents and everything but I wasn't so much aware of it when I was younger but my parents helped me with it all.

The idea of being "unaware" of learning a second language is similar to Isabelle's and Margaret's narratives. Their parents valued French and education and this

was instilled at a young age for the teachers. Their passive role in French language learning contrasts with Evelyn's because she recounts playing an active role in her French learning and expresses an intrinsic desire to learn French at an early age.

The participants all come from different family backgrounds that have a tie to the French language and French culture. For Evelyn, her father is French, and this inspires her to learn French and harness her passion for the French language, which she later uses as a French immersion teacher. For Isabelle, it stems from both her parents who have French backgrounds and are both French immersion teachers. The presence of French is the most prominent in her household than the other participants. This is an aspect of immersion teacher identity that has not been addressed in current research. The impact of parents on the formation of teacher identity is worth noting as it offers insight into the presence of French in the family life of the teachers and allows room for exploration on how this influences the value that the teachers place on French in the classroom with their students.

Influence of Teachers

Evelyn presents the most vivid description of her first French teacher-Mademoiselle Boule*:

Here was a French teacher who would come once a week and her name was, well we had to call her Mademoiselle Boule. She had a charm bracelet that you could hear from the parking lot and her hair was always done and she looked so glamorous and she would teach us French. think I just kind of thought wow all of a sudden it seemed if I could speak French I could be fancy like her and have a charm bracelet like her or whatever I was thinking and that was the first time I really ever heard anybody speak French. And I just kind of fell for it.

Evelyn idealizes knowing French, she describes it very romantically as being a mystery and once she heard it "falling" for the language.

So this French teacher would come with her overhead projector, we'd hear her and her heels and French and it was just I don't know how to describe it but it was just, I just remember thinking that this was wonderful, that it was a moment in the school week where it could be somehow a little bit elevated and we were learning something that was completely different and uh and I just loved it and I just thought that I probably had been transported someplace else and on her overhead projector would be little overheads and little movies, those terrible little movies that came in canisters of Paul and Susan with the Eiffel tower in the back and it's just it was too much and then she'd go and it would be like don't go, take me with you to wherever you go.

Evelyn's teacher identity is influenced by her first French teacher as she represents the idealized version of a second language teacher that Evelyn tries to emulate.

Margaret recognizes the role her teachers played in her teacher identity and as a French immersion student. However, teachers were an apparent influence that did not need to be mentioned. Margaret says: "like well obviously my teachers". The notion that her teachers were influential in her learning is self-explanatory in Margaret's opinion. She does not explain her teachers influence any further.

In Sophie's narrative, she does not mention the role of the teacher at all. This could be due to the fact that learning languages came naturally to her and the role of the teacher was not a key relationship in her French immersion journey. She describes herself as a language person, she says:

I found math and sciences so much harder, so I did really start to enjoy French because I learned the grammar, all the rules so it definitely got easier as I got older.

Isabelle talks about her schooling experience and describes it as being "surface level". She reflects on her French lessons and remembers that she did not feel a sense of connection to what was being taught. She mentions the influence of her teachers once, when she recounts a trip to Quebec planned by her teachers that brought the French culture to their French immersion classroom.

Like the Quebec trip, that was so fun and inspiring and that was something that teachers did to show that the language is really cool and really exciting and fun and lively.

Bringing the French language in the real world was an important moment.

When you went to the restaurant you ordered your food in French, which was totally different than anything that was happening at school. It just opened up this whole new world where French is more than something you just have to speak when you're in class. It was really fun, and I think that is a great thing that some schools do.

Isabelle appreciates the effort that it takes for a teacher to inspire their students to speak French but acknowledges the difficulty of bringing French into a classroom in a city where English is the dominant language. She refers to this

difficulty when reflecting on herself as a French immersion teacher and says that “getting the students to speak French is very challenging”. Isabelle mentions a way of teaching a second language that she views as being prevalent in French immersion classrooms. The mentality that if “you speak English you will be punished, I don’t think that really sends the right message”. She says: “how can I tell them that they are going to be punished for speaking their language? It doesn’t feel right to me”

In this section of Isabelle’s narrative, she is negotiating between the way she was taught and offers a comparison between her past perception of her teachers when she was a student and her role as a current teacher. She is self-aware and reflects on the positive and negative experiences of her French language learning and uses her experience as a starting point to alter her teaching based on her own philosophy.

Summary

Inspiration plays a key role in the becoming of French immersion teachers. For all the participants, the influence of parents is at the core of their French immersion teacher identity and is representative of how they value French and learning. For Evelyn, the relationship she has with her teacher Mademoiselle Boule is fundamental to understanding her reasoning for being a teacher as well as the way that she teaches. Inspiring relationships with parents and teachers are key in immersion teacher development. These relationships are from the past, however, the meso relationships with administrators and colleagues are very much a part of the present.

Administrative Expectations

The administration at the participants’ schools are prevalent in their narratives. The principals have a major impact on the philosophy and climate of the school which affects the identities of the teachers as they must negotiate between their sense of self as a teacher and the expectations of them by their principal.

Sophie discusses the difference between her teacher education and the school where she currently works:

I feel like our education was so much more traditional and the school where I ended up in was not traditional at all, so it was hard not having heard any of the terms that they were using in the school, so I had to learn a lot my first and second year teaching but I do think, of course it prepared me, I learned how to read through the curriculum, but I think practicum was definitely the most meaningful.

She describes the teacher training as being “so much more traditional” and the school where she works “not traditional at all”. Sophie is presented with two different ideologies and must negotiate and redefine her identity by constructing a new philosophy of teaching based on the traditional ways at the university and the new way implemented by her principal.

School Culture

Isabelle is currently working at a dual track school where English stream classrooms and French immersion classrooms are separated. Embracing French culture and the language is an aspect of French immersion teaching that Isabelle views as important. She finds it difficult to work in an environment where she feels French is not being valued. She notices the language culture at the school because in:

The hallways everyone speaks English, the music teacher speaks English, the gym teacher speaks English, the principal, the vice-principal all speak English so how can you, I don't know it's really hard to separate the two.

Her disappointment is apparent, as she knows from her own experience in France and Quebec that:

When anybody spends time completely immersed in a culture and that cultures language there's just no getting around it you're going to improve your skills and that's just the way it is.

She presents an incident where her frustration became apparent during one of the Christmas concerts at the school:

Everybody sang English songs and I remember thinking that was so weird like you have this opportunity to teach a French song to a group of kids and you're going to instead choose to teach it in English and I get that the English teacher is an English-speaking person but gosh I would volunteer my time to go in and help with the French.

She explains this frustration by saying that “French language learning was secondary to everything else”. Her fellow French immersion teachers shared her frustration and a sentiment of feeling undervalued. The community of French immersion teachers within the larger school context is apparent in the citation above, as Isabelle recognizes a key difference between the beliefs of the French immersion teaching community and English teaching community with regard to French learning. Isabelle is adamant that much more can be done to improve the French language culture at the school and that the English teacher community and specific subject teacher community (i.e gym and music teachers) should be helping to instil and reinforce the French community. Isabelle is negotiating tension between her teaching beliefs and the culture at the school. Isabelle finds the difference frustrating; she can see that the incoherent French community is affecting her students and their desire to learn a second language.

The notion of community is important to teacher identity formation as it represents the negotiation between who a teacher is and who they are within the community. This then implies that there could be a difference between the individual identity and the community identity and how a teacher negotiates this shift influences their own identity as well as alters the communal identity.

Colleagues

The relationship that the teachers have with their colleagues is identified by use of comparison between their teaching practices and values and those of their colleagues. Evelyn compares the difference in the level of French proficiency. She explains that there is a distinction between a francophone teacher and a teacher who uses French solely in the classroom. She uses the following example:

There are teachers in French immersion who have just enough French, they were the winning resume the day they were hiring and I don't say that in any snooty kind of way but then they get in the classroom and they maybe have grade 12 French and they probably did the same program I did at university and everything from that to people like Monsieur Papein* who was from Haiti and taught grade 5 for years and he was an extremely educated Haitian man, French is his first language, and so there's just the luck of the draw who's class you're in and that's going to kind of dictate your experience as a student.

In this citation, Evelyn is recognizing that a teacher who has a French background can offer the students more in terms of cultural awareness. She describes this as “the luck of the draw”, when students enter the classroom. Here Evelyn is categorizing French proficiency and viewing a francophone teacher as more effective than a second language French immersion teacher. Evelyn differentiates herself from the community of francophone teachers and the community of French immersion teachers. Evelyn belongs to the community of experienced French immersion teachers who have a passion for French.

Margaret offers a different perspective. She is a second language French immersion teacher and does recognize that there is a difference between her teaching and the way a francophone teacher would present lessons. She aligns her identity with French immersion teachers rather than francophone teachers in the following quote:

It's probably different for somebody who's a native speaker, the kids know that I'm anglophone and so I will make mistakes and tell them like oh yeah that's sometimes it's hard like le genre des noms like I get those mixed up too, I have to ask myself is this masculine or feminine.

Margaret and Evelyn's views of what constitutes a good teacher differs. Evelyn views a native French speaker as being the optimal resource for French learning whereas as Margaret views her shared sense of second language identity with the students to be optimal as she has can understand the challenges of French immersion studies in a way that is not possible for francophone teachers. Both teachers belong to different communities within the French immersion program.

When discussing the participants' relationship to their colleagues, there is a dominant presence of language used to exemplify how they interact with their fellow teachers. In a dual track school, where there are English teacher and French immersion teachers, English is the obvious language as it is understood by all. Evelyn explains that if an English teacher is present, the conversation will turn to English to avoid any feelings of exclusion.

If it's the French colleagues, usually in French if we're somewhere in the staff room and there's English speaking people as well, I would not probably I don't recall speak in French while Katija is there having an animated conversation with Lisa in French, and there's Katija thinking that they're talking about me. But amongst my colleagues I would speak I think probably 80 percent in French.

Isabelle, who also teaches at a dual track school, explains the large influence of English because in:

The hallways everyone speaks English, the music teacher speaks English, the gym teacher speaks English, the principal, the vice-principal all speak English so how can you, I don't know it's really hard to separate the two

Conversely to Evelyn, Isabelle does not mention using French with her French immersion colleagues and explains that the majority of the relationships are in English. Isabelle wonders what it would be like to teach at a single-track school where all the teachers speak French and hypothesizes how this could positively impact the students' growth in French. She says:

I think it would be really interesting to teach at a single-track school where the principal, the vice principals, the music teacher, the gym teacher, everybody speaks French in the hallways you speak French, when it's your birthday you speak French, when they say happy birthday over the intercom you speak French

Isabelle's curiosity about teaching in single track French immersion schools is explained by Margaret and Sophie who both teach at completely immersive schools. The reality in those schools, is that everyone can speak French, but the majority of the teachers choose to speak English because they are more comfortable using their first language. Margaret says:

I have lots of francophone friends from work and still I will like to speak to them in English when it's in the staffroom or at lunch or if we were all to go out, sometimes I'll speak French, but it's like I'll tend way more to English

Sophie feels similarly about speaking in English versus French with her colleagues and says:

So, I only use it [French] at work and even with like French teachers, we still speak in English, because I'm more comfortable speaking in English, but I do enjoy it.

The comparison of how the teachers use French and English within their collegial relationships exemplifies their relationship to language. Evelyn is the only participant that mentions speaking in French with her French colleagues "80 percent of the time" whereas Margaret and Sophie admit to rarely speaking in French with their colleagues. Isabelle does not explicitly state the interaction she experiences with her colleagues but alludes to the fact that English is the

dominant language at her school. Margaret, Sophie and Isabelle use language contextually depending on the situation and revert to English when forming bonds with their colleagues. This highlights a key difference between general teacher identity research and immersion teacher identity research with language at the heart of identity negotiations, relationships and narratives.

7.4.3 Presence at the Micro Level

The micro level represents the closest relationship to the teachers that occurs in the classroom. This relationship is between student and teacher. All four teachers discuss the important relationship that they have with their students. The relationship between student and teacher can be viewed as an integral part of the social nature of identity, because students represent the 'why' when asked why the participants continue to teach.

Relationship with Students

Margaret's relationship to her students is a focal point throughout her interview:

So, I'm like to tell them that I totally get when this is like hard for you, like when they say *I don't know how to spell this* word and I say yeah, I totally get that, like Madame did that too, like I was in French immersion too.

She tries to set an example and her rapport with the students stems from their shared French immersion student identity. They are all anglophones, trying to learn a second language and this benefits her and the classroom environment. She does not expect perfection and she wants the students to make mistakes as she knows this is when meaningful learning can occur.

I guess just like to try their best. I don't think they're going to have like full mastery of the language and I think, we have to work on fossilized errors like *j'ai aller* or whatever and everyone's like oh my god like this is so serious and everyone is so up in arms about it but then I'm like yeah but guys like they're not going to get to grade 12 and still be saying *j'ai aller*, like they're going to get over that.

Margaret portrays herself as a very relaxed and understanding teacher. She talks about challenges that arise, when her students are unwilling to participate and her expectations:

I feel more strongly over the years is that if the student motivation is just not there like I have had a couple times the kids just do not want to speak French and all it does is create a constant battle between parents and child; teacher and student where it's like we're constantly nagging them to like speak French, they don't want to like that is just like making education negative for them and there is no benefit to that.

Margaret expects her students to try and speak French as much as possible. Her sense of shared identity is also rooted in her expectations. She recognizes that speaking a second language can be challenging. She does it every day as a teacher and allows herself to be vulnerable and make mistakes because she acknowledges that she has not mastered the French language. She expects the same effort from her students.

Isabelle expresses a similar relationship to her students because of her understanding of the challenges of learning a second language. Her description is more detached than Margaret's because she does not talk about the similarities between her and her students, rather she recognizes the difficulties from the standpoint of a French immersion teacher. She says:

I expect you to put your best effort. It's hard but the expectation is to show interest and to want to learn and to want to try. I expect my students to try because if they're going to try then I will continue trying. We're all in this together it's a whole different atmosphere.

Isabelle relies on her students to come to class with enthusiasm as this is motivating for her as a teacher. There is a symbiotic relationship between Isabelle and her students, and similarly to Margaret, she expects her students to match her level of effort. This reinforces her sense of teacher identity because she takes pride in her work and having her students experience an immersive classroom environment.

Sophie's relationship to her students is similar to Margaret and Isabelle. She discusses the importance of effort on the part of her students. When her students are putting in effort, this reinforces her purpose as a teacher and aligns with her teacher identity. She says:

I expect just that they, they use the words that they know, so when they can and then to pick up on those cues, and there's always kids that say like "well I don't speak French" and they kind of they already have an attitude that they just don't know what they're doing so they're not even going to try but you just tell them, that no one here does so you just have to pick up on those cues and you follow the routine, right? So just following instructions in French and using words that they know, that's what's expected.

Evelyn also discusses the importance of effort when discussing her students. She views her students and treats each one as being unique; she explains that she modifies her expectations of her students based on their needs. Evelyn prioritizes knowing her students and understanding them in order to better their learning.

Well I just, I just expect that they do their best and that's different for everyone and that takes a while to as a new teacher, not necessarily a new teacher but a teacher at the beginning of a year with a new group of students. It takes a while to get to know your students enough so that you can modify your expectations for each of them in a way that they can all be included in your lessons and um in a second language class in the French subjects, just to do your best just to find ways to retrieve what you learned the year before and to see a connection to what you're learning this year. And that a language needs to be used or it will be lost and even if you're stumbling through and making mistakes, we will work with that

The relationship between student and teacher is a very important one for all the participants. They rely on the effort and enthusiasm of their students as a motivator to teach with the same level of enthusiasm. Margaret displays the strongest sense of shared second language identity, using her student identity to build a bond with her current students.

7.5 How the Discontinuity of Identity is Present in the Teachers' Narratives

Discontinuity is present throughout the careers of the French immersion teachers as mentioned in the theoretical framework. Existing research suggests that the evolution of identity is predominant when there is a change in knowledge, an institutional change and an emotional change. As identity is in constant flux and continually changing, these three components can be viewed as part of the identity researchers' toolkit in order to concretize the fluid concept of teacher identity.

7.5.1 Change in Knowledge

Knowledge about French Immersion Teaching

Evelyn decided to become a French immersion teacher because she was presented with new facts about the benefits of bilingualism in Canada. She explains her story:

I had not yet gone back to school after graduating grade 12 and I remember finding an article in the globe and mail that had been written by some sort of a futurist and they imagine that in the 10 years to come that there was going to be a severe shortage of teachers, particularly in special education, kindergarten and French immersion at this point the French immersion program was taking off and there were not enough qualified teachers to fill the positions that were coming up so then I just sort of decided right then and there that I was going to go back to school and that I was going to um become a teacher so I went to the red deer college and they didn't have an education, they have a program now for middle school but they didn't have anything like that back then, but they had transfer programs and I just did a general well kind of literature specialization but then when it was time to do the transfer, I went to a University and that was how I sort of began to master if you can use that word to work towards mastering of the French language and to work within it.

Evelyn was at a point in her life where she needed to make a decision career wise and becomes a French immersion teacher because of employment opportunities. Her change in knowledge about French immersion and teaching aligns with her identity as she has already established a passion for French learning and is now able to pursue that passion in a classroom setting.

Margaret explains a similar situation to Evelyn, where the idea to pursue her degree in French immersion education was suggested to her by a friend. Margaret pursued both a French and Spanish degree at the university

level, as she was finishing her language degree, she started to think “well, what else? What now”. One of her friends from her Spanish program was going into education and encouraged her to do the same. She thought:

I do love learning languages and I would love to transmit that to children and help kids learn languages so I'll go and be a French immersion teacher and that's totally just how it happened, like by chance and because I had enjoyed my experience learning French and by that time I like deeply valued having second language or more languages and so I was like oh I could pass it on like help kids do that because I think that it's important.

Both Evelyn and Margaret have a similar experience- that their change in knowledge led them to becoming French immersion teachers. For Evelyn, it was because of a prediction in the newspaper and for Margaret it was because of a friend. The change in their knowledge about the possibility of teaching and the opportunities associated with teaching changed their perception of the teaching profession and the career opportunities in their future.

Perceptions of Teaching versus the Reality of Teaching

The reality of teaching versus the “phantasy of a teacher” (Janzen, 2014) is apparent in three of the narratives. However, Evelyn expresses this change in perception at the level of a change in knowledge.

As a preservice teacher, Evelyn is unaware of the additional pressures and expectations for teachers. She discusses the expectation to modify her teaching to fit the needs of every student, a reality that was not addressed at university. Evelyn discusses how she feels when she completes her teaching degree:

I think that when I first began teaching, I left university feeling like I am the teacher and you are the students and let's see what we can get done and I didn't really in university learn very much about, what do you call that? When you change. Why can't I think of this? You change what you're teaching. There's a different word than modification. You know what I mean, differentiation that's the word. And I didn't learn anything about that. I didn't learn anything in university that would help me to put myself in the shoes of my students. Whether it's empathy for a home life or whether it's empathy because this is somebody who definitely needs a challenge because this is too easy for whatever reasons. They have an ability with language perhaps. And even when I left teaching, I still felt like I could get much better at that. After 24 years I felt like there's still a lot of work to do still to be able to be really good at that.

This statement represents how Evelyn perceived teaching versus the reality. She was not prepared by her teacher education training to differentiate her teaching to fit the needs of each of her students. She was not aware of all the other factors

that teachers need to consider. The new knowledge she was presented with during her in-class experiences changed the way she felt about her competency as a teacher as well as her role in the classroom. This was a significant shift in Evelyn's professional career and identity.

Evelyn explains another way in which her expectations of teaching differed to the reality in relation to the influence of the parents in her classroom. They had expectations for their children that were not being met by her as a teacher.

Well when I was studying there was a great emphasis on how you can build on what the kids already know and give them a new language to express what they already know and I learned really quickly once I was in the classroom how important that was because suddenly kids who could read in English, this was kindergarten mind you, this is what I specialized in, who could pick out a few words in English wouldn't necessarily do the same things in French and I wasn't prepared for the level of frustration on the part of the kids and on the part of the parents that they weren't learning it faster and then Christmas time came around and why can't you, I remember this student's name is Charles and his dad was a very important man and he had, he was videoing him and wanted Charles to explain the coin de calendrier [calendar corner] to his dad, well he couldn't and he was being videoed and his dad was getting very frustrated that he couldn't in the last four months somehow well how come you didn't learn how to say all of these things in French? And so, it just gave me a bit of insight because I was in French because I wanted to be there, and I worked really hard at it but the students may or may not have had a hand in the decision to go into French immersion.

Evelyn presents an example where she understands that there is a difference between her enthusiasm as a French language learner and how her passion to learn French is not always shared with all her students. She reflects on the difference between her French language identity and the French language identity of her students and recognizes that for her it was her choice, whereas for some of her students it was something that they were forced to do. She reinforces this difference by saying:

Language learning is something that I always took for granted because I came from a family that encouraged me to read, I've always encouraged my kids to read, I love to read doesn't everybody?

Her realization that everybody 'does not love to read' or that family values differ in every case is a change in her perception of teaching and thus in her teaching identity.

Shift in Valuing French

The shift in how French is perceived is recognized as a facet in the discontinuity of identity and more specifically as a change in knowledge because it represents

a key moment when there is a change in the way that the participants feel towards French. This change occurs as the participants get older and realize that there is value in knowing a second language. The change in how the teachers value French represents a change in knowledge because they begin to view French as being important for their futures. Above, Evelyn's view of French shifts when she reads that there is a demand for French immersion teachers in the workplace, and although, her passion for French has remained constant, the news that French is an asset, reinforces her bond and love for the language.

In Margaret's case, her shift as a French language learner is exemplified when she decides to pursue French in University.

It wasn't until university that I wanted to speak French and I wanted to improve and took it more seriously. In the end and saw the real value in it and it wasn't like an embarrassing thing, it was like a huge skill that I had like above and beyond monolingual people.

Margaret describes her mother as always valuing French and encouraging her to do the same. Margaret comes full circle as a French immersion learner in University when she begins to see the value in knowing French as a second language. It was when she graduated high school and chose to continue French that she took ownership of her learning and learning and speaking French became her choice.

Isabelle's shift in knowledge begins in grade 10. She describes herself as a typical French student, where "learning French was cool until grade 3". After grade 3, she admits that learning French was something that felt forced on her rather than something she was interested in doing. This feeling began to change in grade 10, when Isabelle recognized that speaking French would be a useful skill in the future and started to feel more connected to the French culture.

Isabelle's choice to become a French immersion teacher was an obvious and was not suggest by an outside source as was the case with Margaret and Evelyn. Both Isabelle's parents were French immersion teachers, and she says that the second language aspect of teaching did not register with her until she was admitted into the program:

When I got to [university] it became more about the second language whereas at first it was sort of an obvious choice. Well obviously, I will pursue this in French.

Sophie's story is similar to Isabelle in the sense that teaching French immersion was an 'obvious' choice. Sophie describes herself as a language person, she says:

"I found math and sciences so much harder, so I did really start to enjoy French because I learned the grammar, all the rules so it definitely got easier as I got older"

The knowledge of her giftedness in French acts as her motivator to continue to pursue French learning. She goes on to say that after learning the French grammar she took Spanish in high school and learned that easily because there were many similarities with the rules. Her knack for learning languages was exemplified in high school where she excelled in her language classes and struggled with math and science.

Although Sophie, knew she was gifted in languages, she admits that as a student she "thought it was pretty uncool". This is similar to the feelings expressed by Margaret and Isabelle towards French as a student. She says that she did not like to speak French and would even address some of her teachers in English. Although she recognizes that as a student she did not like to speak French she explains that as a tutor her feelings towards French changed:

but what is funny is I really liked teaching French to my neighbours, it was just at school, I didn't want to be caught, unless I was getting marks for it, then you had to be careful.

Sophie, Isabelle and Margaret all admit that at a certain point, learning French was 'uncool' and it was not until they were older that they realized there was value in knowing French. Margaret explains that this experience of French language learning becoming 'uncool' is still present today and she expresses her frustration that the French immersion program has not been able to address problems that she faced as a student. The frustration will be explained in the following section.

Each participant talks about an obstacle that arises when learning French was either difficult because of school pressures or social pressures. In Evelyn's case, she was forced to take a typing class that she describes as "hating" and "being an awful typer" in order to take the French classes that she loved. In the end, she rebelled against the school policy and stopped taking both classes, she realized that her love and passion for the French language was at that point

enough to continue her studies independently until she went to University. The other three participants mentioned that French became uncool at a certain point, and that the social pressures they faced from their peers prevented them from wanting to speak French. Although, this pressure was present in Isabelle, Margaret and Sophie narratives, the influence of their parents and how their parents valued the French language was strong enough to combat the “uncool” stages of French and each participant continued with their French learning in University and still use French daily. They use this personal knowledge to inform and develop their identities as teachers.

7.5.2 Emotional Change Relating to Teaching and French Immersion

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, and referring to Pappa et al. (2017), positive and negative emotions are central when discussing emotional change that affect teacher identity. When analysing the role of emotions for each participant, the intensity of the stories is influenced by the presence of emotion. The negative emotions are derived from feelings of being unheard or expectations not being met, as well as circumstances that negatively impact the students. This is also seen with positive emotions, as all the participants described their positivity in relation to the French learning of their students.

Negative Change

Evelyn, Margaret and Isabelle discuss negative emotions relating to the teaching profession and themselves as second language learner that alter their view of themselves and their identity.

Evelyn begins by describing the shift in her views on French as a student. She describes her experience as a French language learner, as “going downhill” after her French teacher Mademoiselle Boule. Her view of the French language shifts, when she discusses her experience in high school where she felt forced to learn French. At the beginning of Evelyn’s story, she uses the word “choose” when describing learning French expressing that it was her choice, but later talks about how taking French in high school felt “really forced”. Mostly

due to the fact, that the school required all the students taking French to also take typing. Evelyn admits to hating typing and not being a very proficient at typing. The negativity she felt for typing never completely overshadowed her desire to learn French, but she says that near the end of her last year in high school, she stopped taking French and was frustrated with the school regulations on typing and French. Evelyn shares the negativity she feels towards French as being influenced by external pressures and how this affects her desire to want to pursue French in a classroom setting. This can also be related to how she perceives her role in the classroom. She feels sympathy towards her students that feel forced to be in French immersion rather than their choice to learn French as mentioned in the section on 'change in knowledge'.

Isabelle discusses the challenges with her students regarding learning French: "I think the most common all across the country probably anywhere is this challenge that teachers face that is starting a fire in these students". This inability to "start the fire" in her students is taxing on Isabelle because her mission as a teacher is for her students to be inspired. When she is not able to fulfil this purpose, she is discouraged she describes it as "very challenging when you have a classroom full of kids who don't want to speak French and they almost dumb down their knowledge and they will say things that they know are incorrect". She says that this is the most difficult challenge because she knows that if the students are not using the language then they are not improving. She talks about her colleagues and how they have used many different strategies to encourage their students to speak French but for the most part the strategies currently used in her school do not have lasting effects.

Isabelle provides both a realistic and optimistic depiction of her role as a teacher. There is conflict between the idealized version of teaching that she had expected and the challenging reality that teachers face. She is also negotiating between her role as a French immersion teacher in a school culture where both English and French are used. Isabelle's passion for teaching the French language and culture is a recurring theme when talking about her teacher identity. The

passion she has to instil and inspire French language learning in her students is what motivates her to continue in the teaching profession.

Margaret explains the negative shift towards French as a second language student. She explains that the school was mostly English, apart from one French immersion class. She states that as she “got older, it [speaking French] definitely got like a stigma”. In school, the English students referred to her French class as the French fries, and she explains that they were viewed as “kind of like we were the dorks kind of because we were doing an extra academic thing I guess”. This affected her desire to learn French and refers to her elementary and high school French as something that was imposed on her. Although there was a stigma, she was friends with a group of girls who wanted to be successful in school and make an effort, and although they did not necessarily want to speak French, they tried for academic purposes. By the end of grade 12, Margaret admits to not being a functioning bilingual yet decides to pursue French in University. This exemplifies her commitment to continue to learn French and her view of herself as a lifelong learner. This showcases her awareness of her identity as she is able to self-assess her level of French and her confidence because despite her perceived language identity she continues to pursue French.

Stagnation of the French Immersion Program

The lack of change can also negatively impact teacher identity and this was present in Margaret’s narrative. The stagnation of the French immersion program is what contributes to her identity conflict. There is a disconnect between her growth as a teacher and the stagnation of the French immersion program in Canada.

Margaret makes an interesting observation when reflecting on herself as a student and now as a teacher. She describes seeing the “same things” and problems that she had experienced as a student.

It is really interesting, so with students I see the same thing that I saw when I was a kid. What’s really weird is when we’re talking about this one day about the same fossilized errors like j’ai aller [I went] and stuff like that where I’m like why have we been making these errors for 30 years? Then same as with the kids attitudes, they’ll have the same

attitude sort of shift sort of starting around like grade 5 or 6 where they like don't want to speak French anymore because it's like not cool like that what I had when I was a kid like 30 years ago.

Margaret expresses frustration that the program has not evolved and that students are still making the same mistakes and lack the desire to learn a second language.

I've been thinking about this a lot lately because like I said we have had conversations from why are we still hearing the same fossilized errors we've been hearing for 25- 35 years in French immersion like why is this still happening? Why do kids leave grade 12 and they're not functioning bilingual? So where is the disconnect? I think that immersion programs are good but I think that there has to be way more increased focus on the speaking and the listening and not as much on the reading and writing because if you can speak and listen obviously you will be able to read and write it later and that explicit grammar teaching okay fine but especially the early years for us in elementary I think that the kids should just be able to speak and understand more and they just like don't get enough opportunity and like of course then they can't speak French.

Margaret is negotiating between her belief in learning a second language, but also the validity of the program and questioning why French immersion learning has remained stagnant. She thinks of what needs to change in the following statement:

[speaking about how French immersion has changed] Yeah definitely, so like at the beginning how I was just saying I had this recent realization about how there should be more focus on like the oral communication or whatever I just didn't think about that like earlier as a teacher and that's just from experience and just like over the years of observation like oh my god I'm still having all these same problems. We've talked a lot recently at my school about having more focus on like oral language not so my on like reading and writing.

Margaret, is negotiating between her identity as a student, as a first-year teacher and her current teacher identity. She is realizing that she has gained experience and expertise on what her French immersion students need, but that the French immersion program is rigid and does not allow for teacher development and freedom within the program. This stagnation inhibits Margaret from using her expertise and enriching the learning of her students.

Positive Change

Sophie refers to her experience as a French immersion teacher in kindergarten and discusses her role as the first introduction to the French language. She describes teaching French immersion in kindergarten as being "pretty cool", she says:

There's always one [student] that will just pick up on the connection, like they make the connections in English and French so they're kind of the leaders in the class and they'll figure out what the teacher is saying but it's cool to see the kids start to use French words in English sentences because they can't even think of the English word for that anymore, so I think it's super cool and I love being with the youngest ones learning French for the first time, because you do see the whole growth throughout the year, so I think it's pretty cool that you can speak in French and they figure it out, even though they have no clue what you're saying but they just pick up on words and actions and yeah it's cool.

Isabelle shares a similar sentiment to Sophie and expresses her joy when the students start to use the language independently. This sense of joy, derives from her experience as a teacher and seeing the students improve exponentially throughout the year. She shares this story:

When I was teaching grade 1 and the same thing happened when I was teaching grade. It was the beginning of the year and you're speaking as much French as you can but there's still a lot of English, especially in grade 1 and you are moving forward with your lessons and you're doing your home reading in the second language and especially in grade 1 when you're actually teaching the skills on how to read and decoding and making those sounds and all of a sudden and it happened both times and all of a sudden these kids are speaking French and it's almost like it happens overnight.

Evelyn excitedly shares the moments in teaching where her students are understanding the language and they are piecing together their French identity. She is excited because she loves to watch this progress and know that she participated in the discoveries of her students. Her love of teaching stems from her love of the language and when she sees her student's expressing that same level of love for the language.

They will get something, they'll all of a sudden have some understanding and they'll come racing up to you and they'll tell you, you know that they understand this and they'll say does that mean blah blah blah or does that mean this this this and you're like yes it does and uh and you know they'll think of I don't know, what can I use as an example, the word la neige and they'll see it in you know, they'll read about the machine qui deneige the airport and then they'll see this connection. Suddenly a line will blur, and two little understandings become one bigger understanding, or they'll be reading in French and they'll have some word, some important, word of the week or something like that and they'll find it and they'll come and show me. It's the most important thing that they've made a connection between something that I've taught and something that they've now learned. And not that, that doesn't happen in English but kids they already have had many of those moments and so to see it in French is, it's just really exciting. And they're excited, so then you're excited.

Sophie, Isabelle and Evelyn all share stories that refer back to their part in the language learning of their students. The emotions tied to the stories emphasize the teachers' passion for second language learning and these experiences reinforce their French identity by aligning with their purpose for being French immersion teachers.

7.6 How the Multiplicity of Identity is Present in the Teacher's Narratives

Teacher identity is comprised of multiple sub-identities. The teachers have intricate and detailed sub-identities that contribute to their identity as a whole. When recounting their stories, the participants aimed to present a cohesive identity. The participants refer to each sub-identity under the same umbrella of identity, rather than viewing each sub-identity as unique entities that make up identity as a whole. This is common as the sub-identities do not represent distinct personalities rather they work together and negotiate subconsciously depending on the context. Therefore, when recounting their stories, the participants tended to view identity as singular, although during the analysis, the multiplicity of teacher identity is apparent as the teachers present many different roles and 'hats' they wear. The multiplicity of identity is influenced by context and relationship as presented in the previous research questions and different sub-identities are presented based on these factors.

As the role of language is a key component in SLTI research, there was a distinction between an English, French and bilingual sub-identities. This distinction will be explored in the following section along with teacher roles mentioned in the participants' narratives.

7.6.1 Sub-Identities

English Identity

Isabelle, Sophie and Margaret emphasize that their use of English is more prevalent than their use of French and this differentiation is highly contextual. Isabelle provides a more detailed description by explaining that notices a correlation between her identity and the language she is speaking. She says: "When I'm with my friends, when I'm with most of my family, English is just what we revert to". This is the norm for her and her family as she states that it is the "same with my mom and dad. They both speak French really well, but the way that we roll is that we speak English to each other". She comments that some people have considered it "weird" that she speaks English with her parents

and not French. She says: "Well that's just not who we are right". This comment is indicative of the authenticity and strong sense of belonging she feels towards the English language. Isabelle continues and mentions the role of humour. She says: "I joke around in English, and I do not in French I mean I do a little". In this statement, Isabelle confirms that her personality differs in French and English which is reinforced by her statement "it's funny how your dynamics change when English is involved." She expresses the ability to "joke around" more in English. She tries to verbalize the difference by saying: "I don't know how to put it in words, I don't want to use the words less professional because I'm not less professional, but I might say something like okay c'mon to a student, it's a feeling of being more casual". She also reflects on the fact that "it's probably easier in English to develop relationships with the students as opposed to French". Isabelle offers a clear distinction between her French and English persona and alludes to the fact that she feels more authentic when using English.

Sophie and Margaret both admit to using English with their colleagues at school. Sophie says: "Even with like French teachers, we still speak in English, because I'm more comfortable speaking in English, but I do enjoy it" and Margaret says, "I have lots of francophone friends from work and still I will like speak to them in English when it's in the staffroom or at lunch or if we were all to go out, sometimes I'll speak French, but I'll tend way more to English.". Both Margaret and Sophie use English outside of the classroom and Margaret acknowledges that even when she is presented with opportunities where she could be using French when speaking to her francophone colleagues, she resorts to speaking in English. This is a sign that there is a certain level of comfortability in regard to the language that is being used and that English for Margaret and Sophie represents that comfort zone.

Isabelle, Sophie and Margaret mention that they feel more natural speaking English. They use English in their social interactions with their colleagues at school as well as in their personal lives. Evelyn is the only participant that uses French when she is presented with an opportunity. Evelyn discusses her English

identity in relation to her French identity and the differences between the two identities.

French Identity

Evelyn romanticizes the French language and describes hearing French for the first time as follows:

That was the first time I really ever heard anybody speak French. And I just kind of fell for it. So, then this was my first time ever hearing my father's language in a classroom setting and it wasn't the radio because sometimes he would listen to the radio or watch or you know to entertain himself watch French on the two channels that we had, one of which was French. But yeah just an escape being transported by Mademoiselle Boule and her 50-pound charm bracelet.

There is an alignment between Evelyn's sub-identities in this statement. Her sub-identity of French culture is reinforced by hearing the French language for the first time:

So this French teacher would come with her overhead projector, we'd hear her and her heels and French and it was just I don't know how to describe it but it was just, I just remember thinking that this was wonderful, that it was a moment in the school week where it could be somehow a little bit elevated and we were learning something that was completely different and uh and I just loved it and I just thought that I probably had been transported someplace else and on her overhead projector would be little overheads and little movies, those terrible little movies that came in canisters of Paul and Susan with the Eiffel tower in the back and it's just it was too much and then she'd go and it would be like don't go, take me with you to wherever you go.

Evelyn's French identity represents her idealized and romanticized version of self. She describes French as an "escape" and talks about French class as being "transported" out of her daily life.

Isabelle offers a different perspective than Evelyn, as she does not romanticize French and says:

In French I have to work hard at it and so it's a little bit, I wouldn't say it's less authentic it's just different and it's definitely not the same. In French I know all the formal lingo but the informal lingo in the classroom is something that I never really been privy to so I don't really know.

Isabelle believes that her lack of authenticity in French stems from a limited vocabulary. She is not able to freely express herself in French the same way she can in English and this contrast limits her confidence in French and reinforces her relationship to English.

Isabelle differentiates between her French cultural identity and her French language identity in her narrative. She expresses a love for French culture that stems from her French family roots and spending time in France during her childhood, yet she does not feel authentic speaking French. She talks about French culture as being a facet of her identity but refers the language as an inhibitor. This differs to Evelyn's narrative where hearing the French language reinforced Evelyn's cultural and language French sub-identities. In Isabelle's case, there is an increased divide between the cultural and language components of her French identity.

Margaret and Sophie, present different French identities to Evelyn and Isabelle that are less centred on family influences. Margaret describes French as her:

Other working language so I associate it with like work and school and learning and not so much just my natural second language that I would speak in my free time or if I was out with friends, like for example, I still have this sort of working relationship with it where I view my French as like that's what I do at work and I don't really speak it recreationally or socially outside of work, not that that's changed since I've been a teacher but it's just that's always been what it's been and I don't know if that's because I grew up as a French immersion student, so for me French has always been associated with school and academics, for myself and as a university student and then now as a teacher and so that's just how I view it. I don't view it as one of my living languages that I speak outside of work or school. So, I definitely just see it like not my go to language I guess, it's like I view it as like my working professional functional language not the same as my personal life language.

Sophie also explains that her use of French is very contextual. She associates French with being a teacher and tries to use it as much as possible in the classroom:

We use English and French and when there's behaviour, it's way too hard to go and use a second language if you actually want to get your message across and you want to calm someone down when they're upset. You have to use English, but I think definitely the instruction, I agree with that [using French] and I think it could even continue into high school, like I've never understood why in high school you start to take your sciences in English like I don't quite understand all of that. I think in the early years for sure the hundred percent in French is good.

In this statement, Sophie explains the importance of immersive French. She views French as being an important element for her students' identities and only uses English when necessary in her classroom, but as stated above when explaining her English identity, she uses French exclusively in the classroom.

Her view of French and her actions differ as she has different expectations of her French identity and her students' French identities.

Margaret and Sophie view their French language identity as rooted in a school context. Margaret hypothesizes that this is potentially attributed to growing up as a French immersion student and associating French with being in the classroom. This hypothesis could be the same for Sophie, as she was also a French immersion student, and her French learning was isolated to a classroom context after moving to Alberta where English is the dominant language.

Bilingual Identity

Bilingualism is present in Margaret and Isabelle's narrative whereas it is not mentioned in Sophie and Evelyn's narratives. This could be due to the fact that their bilingual identities are implied. Sophie was born in a bilingual city and her parents are bilingual, and Evelyn expresses a love for French and uses it daily in her social and professional life. Margaret and Isabelle discuss how they do not feel completely bilingual despite the fact that they are French immersion teachers and have been learning and speaking French for the majority of their lives. Margaret says:

I still don't think I'm functioning bilingual like there's so many things that I don't know how to say and maybe that shouldn't be the aim of French immersion.

Isabelle explains:

I feel like if anyone was to say to me well what's your first language? I could never say English and French it would always be English, and I don't know if that could ever change. Even if I moved to France and lived there for 25 years. I still feel like I don't know the strongest relationship would be with English.

Summary

Isabelle, Sophie and Margaret present similar English and French identities. They discuss their use of French as being contextual and mostly limited to a classroom setting. They describe English as their living language and use English more frequently than French. Isabelle and Evelyn's narratives bear similarities in terms of their love for French culture. Both teachers express a strong connection to their French family history. For Evelyn, her love of French

acts as a motivator to continue to learn French outside of the school context whereas for Isabelle, she differentiates between her French culture and French language. Both Margaret and Isabelle compare their relationship to English and French when reflecting on their bilingual identities. They recognize that circumstance and context are highly influential when choosing which language to use and view French as their other language rather than a complimenting language to English. This reinforces their English and French identities as being distinct rather than complimentary.

7.6.2 Teacher Identities

English Teacher

Sophie and Evelyn have experience as a French immersion teacher and an English teacher. In their narratives they explain how they feel when they are teaching in English. Sophie says:

Having taught in English for a year and teaching French, I just feel like such a better teacher when I'm teaching in French just because I'm teaching them so much more. English, I felt like so many of them already knew it, like the content but at least if kids know the content but they don't know the language, you're still teaching them something through that lesson, they're still hearing vocab. So, I definitely felt like it was more valuable when I was teaching in French.

Sophie explains that the difference between teaching in English and French is feeling more valued because she is able to teach the students something new that her students have not learned before. She understands that learning is a shared responsibility between parents and teachers, but that in French immersion where the majority of parents are anglophones, there is always the added layer of teaching French. This is representative of Sophie's need to feel valued in her profession, as she is offering a new skill that only she is able to teach to her students.

Evelyn views teaching in English differently by saying:

I think that as an English teacher, you can be more spontaneous, and you can have notions that are more complex you can read books that you would never tackle in grade 3 language arts. So in grade 3 English we're reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Winn Dixie* and um they're kind of sophisticated but I would not be I would not be able to do that level of reading obviously with uh in French and when kids get into grade 3 they suddenly see themselves, the 2 levels of abilities and so I think that in English, you can get more done because you are required to give less instructions more than once, because the understanding is there right away. You don't have to figure out 17 different ways to

explain so that all the students are going to have the same understanding of what to go ahead and do and so it's kind of a way to I don't know relax a little bit, I don't know if that's the appropriate way to address that but it's English.

Evelyn views teaching in English as teaching her students at a higher level than in French because the students are more advanced. This is indicative of a problem with immersion education. Due to the limited vocabulary, there is a difference between the content that she is able to teach in English and in French. She expresses that in English, there are more opportunities for enriching and engaging activities because the students are equipped with the vocabulary to understand the content. French immersion teaching can be seen as surface level whereas in English, more enriching and advanced conversations can be had, and topics can be learned. There are advantages and disadvantages to immersion education, this is one example of a problem with such a program. The advantages will be highlighted in the following section on French immersion teacher sub-identity.

French Immersion Teacher

Sophie describes being a French immersion teacher as:

Always teaching two things at a time, you're like, you're teaching the language but you're also teaching content, yeah so. It's definitely more complex but it's cool when the kids start to pick up on those things, they don't even realize that, they're learning things in another language.

Although Sophie views French immersion teaching as more challenging, she also views it as more rewarding. As stated in the section above on English teacher identity, Sophie feels more valued as a French immersion teacher.

Margaret expresses a shared identity with her students. She was a French immersion student and therefore she talks about understanding how challenging it is to learn a second language in addition to the content. She says:

For me and it's probably different for somebody who's a native speaker, the kids know that I'm anglophone and so I will make mistakes and tell them like oh yeah that's sometimes it's hard like le genre des noms [the type of noun] like I get those mixed up too.

Her ability to understand the experiences of the students helps to create a bond between student and teacher, which she prides herself on and repeatedly mentions throughout her narrative.

Teacher is making Learning Cool and Fun

Isabelle views her role as a teacher as making learning something exciting, she says:

If there isn't someone available to sort of show you how cool something can be, how fun something can be, how exciting something can be, if there is no interest there will be no learning. It will all be surface level, and nothing will last.

She explains:

it's really important to be the person who's playing the French music and bringing out the French movies and cool French books" and finally "I always try to make it cool to put it simply.

Isabelle prioritizes introducing her students to French culture in order to instil a sense of belonging to French outside of the language. Isabelle views this as being very important because it was an element that was lacking in her French immersion schooling experience as mentioned in the meso level in the section on past teacher and participant relationship.

Evelyn explains that as a teacher she tries to be like the French teacher that she admired- Mademoiselle Boule and

Just be this inspiration, the reason that you want to know how to say something fancy and I mean I talk about bringing the curriculum and my class content down to the bare minimum, but I don't mean in doing that other fantastic content wasn't there. When it came down to really evaluate that's what I would look at, but we would use fancy international French words and I would repeat it so often and pretty soon the students are using this language and seeing and bringing poetry in and really exploring the language and sort of exposing the students to that and being the person that is going to expose them to that. To try and light a little fire where if I could do it in French why wouldn't I try?

Evelyn also states:

As a French immersion teacher, I've just learned that you can inspire kids or show them a reflection of themselves as successful students who can love school in a second language that's entirely possible, but you have to be very flexible as a teacher and you cannot, you cannot march in with your one curriculum and your one means of evaluations and your one method of teaching and expect to get very far, very fast.

Evelyn views herself similarly to Isabelle as an inspiration for her students and their role as a French immersion teacher is to create a space where their students can explore the French culture and French language. Evelyn emphasizes the importance to help guide students to see their potential as French language learners and as a teacher to accommodate the needs of her students in order to ensure their success.

Teacher as a Guide and Model

In the classroom Margaret describes her role as setting an example for her students.

I definitely think to set a good example so to try to show them in my case not just to set the example like here we always speak French like maybe francophone teachers might but to be like I'm a second language learner too, here's how you work hard at that and like make an effort like to set an example.

She admits that her French is not perfect and that she makes mistakes, and she tries to demonstrate that mistakes are welcome in her class and are a natural learning outcome. She reinforces her shared second language identity with her students by allowing space in the classroom to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes:

I have to ask myself is this masculine or feminine, or like here's a trick I use to remind myself or so like in that way I think it can help them see oh even Madame like sometimes it's okay that I don't always remember or like I have to ask or look up a word like you know if it's your second language, that's okay that's normal, that sets a good example.

Margaret acknowledges the importance of oral communication in a French immersion classroom. She says: "I see the teacher as more of like facilitating so instead of like stand and talking at the front." She expresses her desire to create a space for her students to speak French and make mistakes in order to improve. The fact that she has been a French immersion student herself and is continually working in the language sets an example for her students.

Sophie also describes herself as a model and guide for her students. She explains:

I think like with all the other learning, you're definitely guiding them through it, because you don't just want to stand up in front of them and tell them everything, they have to explore and discover all of that, but with the language, you're definitely just a model for

them. They hear, the things that you say and then they learn the meaning of it and they learn how to use it themselves, so I'd say yeah like a model.

Sophie and Margaret both highlight their roles as language guides and models. They both prioritize learning centred around the student.

Promoter of Bilingualism/ Defender of the French Language

Margaret promotes learning a second language and believes that this opportunity should be offered to all students. Margaret has worked in the language and literacy program (L & L) at her school for the past 6 years. This program is designed for students who have specific reading and writing difficulties, her role as a teacher is to provide her students with a conducive learning environment that meet their specific needs. She works at the only school in her school board where the program is offered in French, and she uses her background as a lens when discussing French immersion. She is often frustrated by parents, teachers, administrators and psychologists when they begin to question if French immersion is the right choice for a student who has a learning difficulty and describes herself as a “defender of the language”. She explains:

For example, when a psychologist is like oh yeah your child has a learning disability maybe they shouldn't be in French immersion and then the parents come to me with that and I'm like no, I feel I have to go to bat for the kid to stay in French and you can still stay in French even if you have a learning disability specifically to language even, I've definitely become a defender of like the language.

Margaret recognizes that there are preconceived notions of the French immersion program and she debunks the idea that there is one type of student for the program. Her sub-identity of defender of the language is showcased when Margaret faces individuals that question the programs efficacy for every child and makes an effort to encourage parents to keep their children in French immersion.

Teacher as an inspiration

Isabelle describes her role as a French immersion teacher as an inspiration and a shining bright light. She states that:

I just believe that as a second language teacher you need to be the inspiration, the shining bright light the one that sprinkles confetti on everything, who makes everything exciting and very very cool and you need to be able to instil in these students this excitement and this joy that they'll associate with learning that second language because if you can't do that, I don't think that anybody will care and I think it's like that with any subject, you need to be, a teacher needs to be there to inspire and you know if you can make math cool and fun, than your students will succeed and they will excel. If you can make social studies exciting and cool, your students will excel and it's the same thing with French language. I think especially because it's something different. Because it's something that not many other students, or not all the other students in the school are doing so you have to make it extra cool and extra fun.

Her view of herself as a guiding light is consistent in her narrative. Her desire to inspire is expressed in many ways when Isabelle explains how she is “always looking for new activities, the new ways to bring French into the classroom, new ways to inspire” and how “language makes [her] more inspired, having some experience and seeing what is possible when you're teaching a second language”. Here she is also aligning her sub-identity as an inspiration for her students, with the teacher role of making learning cool and exciting. Isabelle believes that by making learning exciting and cool, she will be the inspiration that she thinks her students need to be motivated in her classroom. She identifies what makes a good teacher by saying that “anybody can transmit information and that anybody can teach you know you don't need a teacher to teach grammar, you can go buy a grammar book if you're really interested in it, but the role of the teacher is to inspire this desire to learn more”. She believes that what makes her unique as a French immersion teacher is the emphasis on teaching the French language and teaching the French culture.

Evelyn shares a similar sub-identity as being an inspiration that she equates to her feelings as a student about her French Teacher, Mademoiselle Boule.

Well I think that you are, it's so funny I try to be like Mademoiselle Boule and just be this inspiration, the reason that you want to know how to say something fancy

Evelyn tries to emulate Mademoiselle Boule and instil the feelings that she had towards French in her students.

Isabelle and Evelyn share similar views of their role as an inspiration for their students and playing an active role in motivating their students to learn French. Evelyn discusses how this stems from her background and the way she was taught. Conversely, Isabelle describes her schooling experience as a French

immersion student as being superficial and does not want the same for her students.

Teacher as a Gymnast

Evelyn compares being a teacher to “being a gymnast”, she describes it in such terms when explaining how French immersion has changed in the past 24 years and how the learning needs of her students are more demanding.

As a teacher it’s almost like being a gymnast and being so flexible that you can tweak your content so that everyone can access it almost equally, I say almost to the best of your ability and feel like they are able to succeed in it.

This statement aligns with Evelyn’s desire to help her students succeed. As a teacher, she tries to facilitate their learning in a way that helps her students feel positive and proud about themselves that contribute positively to her sense of teacher identity and their student identity.

Summary

The participants have all showcased different sub-identities within their teaching identities. Some teacher identities are shared, and some are unique to one participant. The following table summarizes which identities are expressed by each teacher and reinforces the notion that all teachers are unique and have individual identities.

TABLE 2.

	Margaret	Isabelle	Sophie	Evelyn
English Teacher			x	x
French Immersion Teacher	x		x	
Bilingual Teacher	x	x		
Teacher makes learning cool and fun		x		x
Teacher as a guide and model	x		x	
Promoter and defender of the language	x			
Teacher as an inspiration		x	x	x
Teacher as a gymnast				x

The findings align with existing research by highlighting that the notion of teacher identity is comprised of multiple teacher identities (Leibowitz, 2017) that negotiate and renegotiate (Beeijard et al., 2014) to make up identity as a whole

and influenced by various relationships. It is understood by identity researchers and exemplified in this study, that identity is individual and should be viewed as unique for every teacher. Teacher identity research requires vulnerability on the part of the teacher to explore not only the professional facet of self but also the personal facet of self. Palmer (1988) argues that this leads to authentic teaching practices and also leads to authentic research. The necessity for vulnerability was apparent in Evelyn's example of 'teacher as an inspiration' because Evelyn uses her past student identity to enrich her current teacher identity.

The findings show a more in depth look into the complex nature of teacher identity and the impact of a second language. The position and role of the teachers has been studied by Søreide (2006), although the role of language on the sub-teacher identities is a new addition to existing research. The following discussion section will open up more elements that align with existing research as well as new findings from the study.

8 DISCUSSION

This chapter aims to create a bridge between the theoretical framework developed in the first four chapters and my findings in the previous chapter by recognizing commonalities between previous studies as well as highlighting new considerations for future research. I used the following three themes: social nature of teacher identity, the discontinuity of teacher identity and the multiplicity of teacher identity to guide my theoretical framework as well as serve as my research questions to create a cohesive alignment between the current research and my study. This is important as I want to reinforce what is already known and raise new elements and facets of teacher identity research that must be further explored.

Teacher identity and SLTI researchers have contributed to the identity researchers 'toolkit' used to exemplify the abstract nature of identity. For example, in the social nature of teacher identity, highlighting relationships at the macro, meso and micro level organize the findings in a way that enriches existing research. The same is found within the section on the discontinuity of teacher identity by acknowledging change in knowledge and emotional change and lastly the multiplicity of teacher identity by recognizing the various sub-identities that make up identity as a whole. These key features within the researchers 'toolkit' have guided and organized my research in a way that compares and compliments current research in the realm of teacher identity and SLTI research. I discovered commonalities between the experiences of teachers in other contexts and how this has influenced their identity as well as new findings that contribute to SLTI research and French immersion teacher identity research.

Social Nature of French Immersion Teacher Identity in Alberta, Canada.

The social nature of teacher identity is a concept that many researchers have explored (Palmer, 1988; Britzman 1991; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Moate, 2011;

Pappa et al. 2017). In this study, the social nature of identity was highly influential in the formation of teacher identity. Research has been conducted on the correlation of past teachers on current teacher identity (Coldron & Smith, 1999). This relationship was apparent in this study as most of the teachers mentioned the role of their past teachers and all of the participants discussed the importance of students to maintain positive view of self and their teacher identity. A significant finding is the relationships that the participants have to their parents and how this represents the foundation that the teachers use to first build their French immersion student identity which later turns into their French immersion teacher identity. The role of parents as a key relationship in the formation of teacher identity should be explored in future research as it offers new insight into the interworking of the teacher identity and a better understanding of the sub-identities created. Neglecting this important relationship does not provide a holistic view of their identity.

Current relationships within the macro, meso and micro level were all present in the narratives of the participants. One of the main relationships was the role of student on teacher identity that has been researched and demonstrated to be an integral part of identity (Palmer, 1988 & Britzman, 1991). The teachers in my study, mentioned that when their students are excited and put in the effort to learn French, this positively impacts the feelings of the teachers and thus the way the teachers perceive themselves which has a direct impact on their teacher identity. Another element that has been explored in existing research is the influence of colleagues and administration on teacher identity an element that has been explored in both teacher identity research and SLTI research (Moate, 2011 & Pappa et al. 2017), yet the influence on language within these communities has not been explicitly stated. This study on French immersion teachers, recognizes the influence of language in these communities. In my research, the teachers mostly resorted to speaking their first language-English when collaborating with their colleagues as this was more natural for them. There is space for future research to analyse why the presence of language is a focal point when French immersion teachers discuss their collegial interactions.

In line with the current research on teacher identity and SLTI, the impact of relationships is at the forefront of the identity of the teachers in this study and although the majority of relationships are reiterated by the French immersion teachers, there is room for more exploration on the role of the parents in the development of French immersion teacher identity as well as the role of language on collegial relationships.

Discontinuity of French Immersion Teacher Identity in Alberta, Canada.

The discontinuity of teacher identity is present in the narratives of the French immersion teachers, however not all three moments of change were represented in the narratives. Change in knowledge and change in emotions were the prominent changes that occurred in the narratives. Change in knowledge occurred at the level of the reality of teaching and the fantasy of a teacher that has been explored in existing research, especially concerning pre-service and in-service teachers (Britzman, 1991, Alsup, 2006, Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013 & Lanas & Kelchtermans, 2015). This was apparent in this study as there was a difference in how teaching was perceived outside of the classroom and the reality of teachers in the classroom. There is a sense of a 'reality check' when the teachers enter the workplace that is covered in current research and reinforced in this study. When discussing language, the French immersion teachers recognized a shift in valuing French as they got older. This change in knowledge is a new finding not present in current research but is representative of a shift in teacher identity as it positively impacts the French identity within the French immersion teacher identity.

The role of emotions as part of the teacher identity researcher 'toolkit' is a fairly new concept. Pappa et al. (2017) reinforce the importance of recognizing the positive and negative emotional experiences of teachers as a window into their identity. Showcasing the range of emotions experienced by the teachers was necessary to understand the teacher identities of the participants. These findings aligned with previous research.

Change is often seen as problematic to teacher identity; a new finding was the stagnation of the French immersion program in Alberta and this negatively impacted teacher identity growth. The negative impact of stagnation is a theme recommended for future research.

The Multiplicity of French Immersion Teacher Identity in Alberta, Canada.

The multiplicity of identity acknowledges that identity is not comprised of one identity but rather is the combination of many smaller identities. This is a perspective/understanding accepted by teacher identity researchers and SLTI researchers alike. SLTI research has exemplified more sub-teacher-identities by recognizing the role of language and its impact on teacher identity. This aligns with this study on French immersion teacher identity, where there are additional sub-teacher-identities' present within French immersion teacher identity that would not be apparent in teacher identity research. For example, the sub-teacher identities of French immersion teacher and English teacher. A new finding in this study is the recognition of a 'bilingual identity' by some of the participants that has not been mentioned in previous research. The French immersion teachers distinguish between their French, English and bilingual identity, which is an interesting observation and place for more research to understand how teachers view each of these identities and how they work together and come into conflict.

8.1.1 Limitations

This research aims to provide French immersion teachers with a platform to share their stories and experiences in the French immersion program in Canada. There are limitations within this study, that must be mentioned in order to present an accurate representation of the data collected and the narratives portrayed. The first limitation concerns the selection of the participants. In order to target the goal of the research, the teachers who participated had to be willing to share their

honest answers and stories to the questions in the interview. The participants, were selected based on my knowledge of them outside of the study. Another limitation is the scope of the research. The data collected from the four participants was insightful and rich, but I recognize that this is not representative of all French immersion teachers in Alberta, let alone Canada. There is room for more participants which could lead to a comparative study on the commonalities and differences within a larger group study. The participants are all female, and the male perspective is not present in the analysis. I cannot comment on whether gender would have affected the teacher's feelings and stories.

Although, my participants offered metaphors throughout their narratives, an artistic component would have been an interesting comparison along with the oral interview. In addition, because this is a study on French immersion teaching, some of the questions could have been asked in French to see if there was a difference in response. In class observations would have strengthened my understanding of the teachers' identities and could have provided a comparison between how the teacher views themselves and the relation to their identity. For even further exploration, there could have been interviews conducted with the teacher's students and the administration to also compare how the identities and the perceived identity are being formed. As well as enrich the social nature component of the study to understand how the key players in the teachers' identity view their role.

As a French immersion teacher, I tried to remain as objective as possible, however, my opinions and prior knowledge about the French immersion program could have influenced the stories that the participants chose to share. I recognize that I played an active role in the interview, because of the prior relationship I have with the teachers and their knowledge of my opinions and beliefs on French immersion.

Identity is in constant flux, and their identity was momentary. Coldron and Smith (1999) "do not interpret identity as fixed or unitary (p. 712). When conducting research in the realm of identity, it serves the researcher to understand that the representation they have co-created with the participants is

a momentary identity and that the researcher has played an active role in the narrative construction. I recognize that my analysis and portrayal of the participants teacher identities are only a glimpse into who the participants are as people and as teachers. A longitudinal study could offer a more holistic and accurate portrayal of the teacher's identities as a whole.

8.1.2 Difficulties in Teacher Identity Research

My research questions of how social nature of identity, discontinuity and the multiplicity of identity is present in the data became limiting as many of the statements and citations could be used for more than one category. For example, in Evelyn's narrative the change in the allocation of money for schools by the government could have been seen as an institutional change and how this contributed to her renegotiation of identity, but also in the social nature of identity because this change incited her reflections on teaching viewing the resources in the past as being better than the current situation and devaluing her profession. Another instance where there were themes that could have been in various categories was the role of the teacher. The role of the teacher was placed in multiplicity to showcase the different 'hats' that French immersion teachers wear, yet their descriptions and metaphors were usually in relation to their students. Their roles could have been included in the social nature of identity as a way to exemplify the relationship that each teacher had to their students and how this affected their identity positively and sometimes negatively. The nature of a study aims to provide fixed and tangible data, yet identity research is abstract and will continue to be a fluid notion therefore acknowledging that the concept of identity research contradicts the very core of defining identity is advantageous when presenting findings.

8.1.3 Identity Deeply Felt and Emotional

The extent to which our emotions shape our identity and how we react in situations is a phenomenon explored by few researchers and must be explored in future teacher identity research. There seems to be hesitancy with regard to showcasing the messy and emotional aspects of teacher identity. In Britzman's (1991) early work, she highlights the intricacies between emotion, teacher backgrounds and how student teachers negotiate between their strong opinions and the delivery of their lesson plans. Britzman's more recent work focuses less on teacher identity and more on psychoanalysis in the classroom, yet the need for research to continue to explore the realm of emotional vulnerability is still apparent and present today. Pappa et al. (2017) have identified that courses on emotions and teacher identity should be addressed at the university level. I argue, that professional development throughout a teacher's career should also address emotions in teaching. Teachers have all addressed negativity towards the profession in different ways, but the teaching profession refuses to recognize the issues and the glamorized idea of teacher is still present. This is apparent in research on pre-service and in-service teachers as well as throughout my research, when my participants reflected on their idea of teaching and the reality of teaching. The role of emotion was not as explicitly present in my research, because of the structure of my interview and questioning, although it has a significant place in teacher identity research. The teaching profession needs to be more open about the emotions and feelings that arise throughout a teacher's career and embrace the negative and positive emotions that teachers are experiencing. Pappa et al. argue (2017) that "legitimizing the expression of emotional experiences like self-doubt, loneliness and vulnerability among CLIL colleagues may be liberating, their presence should be addressed by both local and national professional communities, as they affect well-being efficacy and efficiency in CLIL teaching. (p. 94). Negative and positive emotions are human nature and by being more open and forthcoming, future teaching practices can be enhanced.

8.1.4 A Teacher's Place in French Immersion

French immersion programs in Canada are increasing in popularity and a recent article in CTV (Canadian Television, 2018) news has recognized a shortage of French immersion teachers to meet the demands of the growing number of students. According to Statistics Canada, enrollment has increased by 20 percent between 2001 and 2012 and another 20 per cent between 2015 and 2016. Bilingualism is seen as a social advantage by the majority of Canadians (Roy, 2010), yet research on French immersion is relatively scarce. Alberta Education has recognized the benefits of French immersion for students, these benefits relate to the advantages of second language learning, but rarely research the instrumental facilitator to the learning- the teacher. Tedick and Walker (2000) recognize that "little effort has been made to enlist practitioners in the identification and elaboration of issues, problems, and outcomes related to immersion language education" (p. 6). They argue that "teachers are in a position to illuminate the issues of immersion schooling as we attempt to define the best practice" (Tedick & Walker, 2000). This reinforces the notion that teachers are important members of the education community and their insights and opinions must be taken into consideration. For example, in my findings, Isabelle shares a story about the Christmas concert held at her school. All the songs were in English and she was frustrated that this was not representative of the bilingual school model. If she was asked to share her opinion, she would have volunteered to help the music teacher with the French songs and this would have been an opportunity to reinforce the French identity of her students and a chance for the English students to have a new language experience. Teachers are the foundation of any educational system and should be used as a resource to understand the advantages and disadvantages of immersion learning. By building a bridge between teacher, researcher and government, a more holistic picture of the French immersion program can be presented. The government has agreed to work on the "recruitment and retention of teachers" (Globe and Mail, 2018), although research on how this initiative will be executed is still unknown. Understanding teacher identity can not only help enrich teaching practices but

can also lead to happier teachers. Coldon and Smith (1999) emphasize the individual nature of teacher identity and view identity as the constant negotiation and renegotiation of one's understanding of teaching and the societal pressures of teaching. However, my study shows how significant relationships early in life sow seeds for significant developments later in life- the choice of career pathways, the type of teacher individuals seek to be and become and these teachers are then influencing the lives of others. In the Canadian context, it is apparent that there is a discrepancy between how the country values the French immersion program and how the teachers are feeling valued as professionals. Based on the limited research on French immersion teachers as well as my own experience there is a lack of understanding between classroom practice and educational decision-making. Walker and Tedick (2000) describe this as "the unheard voices of immersion teachers" (p.6). This is contradictory as immersion teacher do not have a voice, yet there continues to be a rise in popularity in French immersion programs and at the government level a need for more French immersion teachers to meet the demands of the growing number of students.

Immersion teachers, regardless of the context, have a tremendous task to teach a second language while teaching content. Margaret, stated in her narrative: "we have so little time to teach all the other core subjects and to teach English and French. I just feel like it's always like grasping at straws or like sand slipping between my fingers, there's never enough time to do everything".

8.1.5 Self-Discovery Through Research

My journey building an understanding of teacher identity and using my own experience to enrich my understanding has led to the development of my teacher identity. The act of understanding what constitutes teacher identity and reflecting on how experiences and interactions have shaped my knowledge of self is proof that knowledge about teacher identity naturally instigates self-reflection and self-awareness. In Palmer's (1988) research, good teaching is described by one of his students as authenticity in the classroom. The student

said, “she could not describe her bad teachers because they were all the same: “Their words float somewhere in front of their faces, like the balloon speech in cartoons.” (p.3). All teachers are individuals and have a unique teaching practice that is authentic to them. Good teachers teach “from true self, from the identity and integrity that is the source of all good word- by employing quite different techniques that allowed them to reveal rather than conceal who they were” (Palmer, 1988, p.5). In other words, by offering teachers the time to explore their identities and understand their role in the classroom, they will be able to uncover their authentic self within the profession for the betterment of education and their students and states: “knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge” (Palmer, 1988, p. 1).

Coldron and Smith (1999) have recognized that “people are as they are because of their past” (p.714). I have often viewed my experiences as a student, as fundamental to my beliefs as a teacher. The need for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices will lead to their discontinuity of identity because of their change in knowledge. My aim is to present my findings and my new perspective on my teacher identity as a starting point to encourage French immersion teachers to reflect on who they are and why they teach. Palmer uses his book, as a call for action to all educators that “we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives- risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.” (Palmer, 1988, p. 13). This thesis is dedicated to French immersion teachers by recognizing their individuality as well as highlighting the commonalities present in the French immersion community.

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