**“Living together” for Quebec’s Francophone and Anglophone youth: a look at the self-representations of the French-speaking youth of Quebec**

DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION

Part of a series of documents pertaining Canadian Heritage’s Living together project.

**APPENDIX G**

This document offers an **overview of Francophone Quebec youth’s self-representations of language issues in Quebec**. It is more indicative than exhaustive, and is not a scientific review of the literature. Rather, this document presents a series of concerns identified in the media or drawn from public consultations and scientific articles.

The selection of issues presented below was presented as part of reflection on “living together” (*vivre ensemble*).

The significance of identity for the Francophone youth of Quebec

* Research shows that young people define themselves in different ways. French speakers see themselves as mainly Francophones and Quebecers, and less so as Canadians. On the other hand, Quebec’s English speakers see themselves as strongly Canadian, bilingual and Anglo-Quebecers, while few define themselves as Quebecers (Bourhis and Sioufi in QCGN, 2015).
* Sociologist Simon Langlois explains that young people [Translation] “do not see borders the same way in our highly interconnected world” (*L’actualité*, 2015). If there seems to be consensus about the French fact in the definition of identity for Francophone youth, its importance within the same linguistic group varies, creating a rift along geographic lines.
* For example, Francophone youth in Montreal feel that, to be considered a full-fledged Quebecer, an individual must [Translation] “identify with Quebec, be willing to live together in French, and speak French at the very least”, while young people outside Montreal feel that it is also necessary to adopt an endogenous accent and linguistic traits, while appropriating a certain form of Quebec culture (CSLF, 2008).
* With regard to identity tension, the work of anthropologist Éric Schwimmer (1972) suggests that, when minority groups have access to levers of power that allow them to compete with their majority counterparts, identity tensions tend to be pacified. This view assumes that, for Quebec’s Francophones, the passage of *Bill 101* and the *Official Languages Act*, as well as the presence of universities, Crown corporations, hospitals and media, ensure that the Francophone youth of today have opportunities for employment, education, health care and entertainment in French, thus creating a pacifying effect. Today’s young people see linguistic competition as being [Translation] “more the effect of the influence of globalization than of rivalries between the Anglophone and Francophone communities of Quebec” (CSLF, 2008).

Social cohesion and living together

* In 2008, the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* concluded that [Translation]“the French language is the main medium that allows Quebecers of all origins to get to know each other, interact, cooperate and participate in the development of Quebec society” (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008). In light of these considerations, it seems entirely legitimate to consider that language and social cohesion go hand in hand. The position of Francophone youth on the importance of language for “living together” remains to be determined.
* It would appear that [Translation] “the upcoming generations are displaying considerable openness in their way of perceiving and experiencing intercultural relations.” That at least is what emerged from the first national forum of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, held in 2007, for youth aged 18 to 35, in which social cohesion was a key topic.
* In 2013, the summer school of the Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM) held a civic education activity at which nearly 400 Quebecers aged 15 to 35 reiterated the importance of promoting French, though without being obliged to do so. They considered it necessary to make it easier to learn English and Indigenous languages, but also foreign languages, so as to facilitate the integration of minorities (INM, 2013b). At a previous edition of this event, the participants had unanimously declared the French language to be [Translation] “the primordial element binding Quebec society together” (INM, 2007).
* Though far from representative of Quebec youth generally, these infrequent provincial forums nonetheless call to mind the importance of the French language for living together, and at the same time, an open-mindedness toward non-Francophone linguistic groups.
* It is also interesting to note that young people find the presence of languages other than the official languages in the public arena to be disturbing, although not as much as the presence of English alone. This would be explained by the fact that [Translation] “the balance of power between third languages and French is not as significant as that between English and French.” As a rule, the total absence of French is cause for frustration, especially where essential services are concerned. That said, young Francophone Quebecers say that, in spite of everything, they are fairly conciliatory toward English when warranted by the number of speakers (CSLF, 2008a).
* How do Francophone Quebec youth perceive this dynamic in the occupational context? The CSLF says they have clearly developed an instrumental relationship which de-dramatizes the presence of English in the workplace, in the sense that English is now [Translation] “perceived as an inevitability which poses absolutely no threat to their Francophone identity” (CSLF, 2008d).
* However, these young people maintain certain concerns with regard to French, particularly in communicative situations where the “investment in identity” is more significant: recruitment, internal communications, health and safety, etc. They seem to prefer expressing themselves in French with their colleagues, but demonstrate openness toward English. For interactions with Anglophone co-workers or clients, however, young people say they are obliged to use English most of the time (CSLF, 2008a).
* Little recent information is available about what young people expect of language used privately, apart from one of the CSLF’s conclusions on the linguistic practices of newcomers, which suggests that young people are not disturbed by the use of another language or practice of another culture at home, and that what is important [Translation] “is that immigrants make the effort to learn French, use it in their public communications, and integrate with the Francophone majority.”

Intergroup relations

* The available literature tells us that young Quebec Francophones support a number of principles in interacting with their non-Francophone counterparts. The work of the CSLF suggests that ideas of [Translation] “mutual respect, effort and reciprocity are always to be found in the discourse of young people.” These attitudes aim to maintain “some degree of balance of power in the public space in the relationship between languages.”
* A 2012 survey of Secondary IV and V students shows that they disapprove of the attitude of Anglophones who, in their opinion, do not learn French [Translation] “because they think that everybody understands English” (CSLF, 2012a). This condemnation of the nonchalance toward French also applies to those Francophones who “speak negatively about their language and do nothing to promote it” (*ibid*). Generally speaking, there seems to be a shared willingness among Quebec youth to encourage the entire population of the province to value proficiency in French (CSLF, 2008).

Interest in English: the case of postsecondary education

* French-speaking youth are attached to their language, but that does not make them any less interested in English, although it cannot be determined with certainty whether that interest is genuinely linguistic or rather the result of a form of utilitarianism, considering that proficiency in English is now a guarantor of social/professional advancement. The attraction, or at least the proximity, of Francophone youth to the Anglophone world nonetheless helps strengthen the social bond between the two communities.
* The exposure of young Quebec Francophones to English is evident from a geographic standpoint, and the recent increase in mobility, combined with the advent of the Internet and new technologies, have widened the English-speaking circles in which Francophones are likely to immerse themselves: TV series, travel, online purchasing, etc. Indeed, French speakers seem to have developed a marked interest in English cultural products.
* For example, since the early 1980s, the Quebec department of Culture and Communications has periodically surveyed the cultural practices of young people, and English has maintained its status as the preferred language for listening to music. Does this interest in the second language, potentially conducive to closer relations with young Anglophones, amount to a disavowal of French? Apparently not, since the Quebec government’s longitudinal data show that tastes tend to change starting at age 25, when listening to music in both languages generally begins to become more common. Sociologist Jacques Beauchemin sees this as a form of clientelism typical of modern generations: [Translation] “today, young people’s relationship to language has become dispassionate, de-dramatized. It’s not that they are deliberately turning their back on French: it’s just that they are indifferent to it. They consume what they consider to be good, whatever the language” (Gauthier, 2001; La Presse, March 13, 2010).
* Apart from cultural practices, which often derive from the private sphere in the age of tablets and smartphones which individualize the relationship to cultural products, the available literature shows that Francophone youth are interested in Anglophone postsecondary institutions. This phenomenon is interesting insofar as CEGEPs, colleges and universities, in addition to producing knowledge, are real-life meeting places for young people. They are institutions with the potential to form [Translation] “a new locus of linguistic and cultural belonging, open to the world (Commission des États généraux, 2001).
* At the college level, the proportion of Francophone students attending an Anglophone CEGEP has held steady at around 5% for many years (Fédération des cégeps, 2013). That figure may seem unique to Montreal, but in Quebec City, where nearly 99% of the population self-reports as French-speaking and there is only one Anglophone CEGEP, one student in 10 studies in English at the pre-university level (*Le Devoir*, June 6, 2017).
* Beyond the interest shown by Francophone youth in Anglophone institutions, a stormy debate has long been raging in Quebec as to whether this sort of college education is likely to be “anglicizing”. While the idea of applying *Bill 101* to the CEGEP has been censured on all sides, certain voices in the political class, but also the academic community, have questioned the freedom that young people now have to study in English if they so desire. In a report published in 2010, the Institut de recherche sur le français en Amérique argues that [Translation] “in the Anglophone college context, linguistic diversity encourages the use of English in all the spheres of daily life” (IRFA, 2010).
* That said, there are other concerns that emerge for young Anglophones who, in attending English-speaking institutions, reinforce the dynamic of “segregation” between the two language groups. The IRFA considers it hard to see how students can develop an “attraction” for French and a sense of belonging to the Francophone “community” while being “in so little contact with Francophone networks” (IRFA, 2010). These conclusions are based on the idea that support for Francophone culture is developed by interacting with multiple networks of Francophone affiliation (Pagé and Lamarre, 2010). The Fédération des cégeps maintains its historical position on free choice of an institution of higher education, asserting that [Translation] “attending Anglophone colleges has very little to do with the phenomenon of language transfer.” This statement is based on admission figures: the proportion of Anglophones enrolled in a Francophone college has been rising since 1998; the proportion of allophones enrolled in an Anglophone college is falling; and the proportion of Francophones in Anglophone CEGEPS is stable (Fédération des cégeps, 2013).
* Once again, this reality raises an important question: are Francophone youth attracted by the English language, or by the institution? In the opinion of representatives of Concordia University and of Vanier and Marianopolis colleges, it seems that [Translation] “most students are attracted by the programs and not the language of the school” (*Le Devoir*, August 27, 2016).
* Directly connected to the theme of this section, the Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l’avenir de la langue française au Québec has something interesting to say about the role that CEGEPs can play in the promotion of “living together.” It says that the institution could become [Translation] “a common locus of expertise, knowledge and cultures” shared by students from the French- and English-language school systems, while sensitizing them to each other. This would appreciably contribute to strengthening the social cohesion of Quebec society (Commission, 2001). Half-way between the current formula, which is likely to isolate Anglophone students from the Francophone culture, and the francization of the entire offering of college instruction, the Commission adopts a moderate position and commends those institutions that “testify to a certain community of aspirations” by offering bilingual exchanges or college diplomas. This would apply, for example, to the CEGEPs of Dawson, Maisonneuve, Vanier, St-Laurent, St-Lawrence, Mérici and Limoilou, which offer different options, mainly in the technical sector, for promoting bilingualism among Francophone students and proficiency in French among Anglophone students (Commission, 2001; *Le Devoir*, June 6, 2017).
* The university, the other flagship institution of “living together”, may be one of the places, especially in the City of Montreal, where Francophone and Anglophone youth interact the most. In 2015, 23% of Concordia students reported French as their mother tongue, compared with 20% at McGill and 25% at Bishop’s University (*Le Devoir*, August 26, 2016). According to Radio-Canada, the proportion of Anglophone and allophone students enrolled in Francophone universities is rising steadily: 70.3% of Quebec students with a mother tongue other than French or English were attending a Francophone university in 2014 compared to 52.2% in 2002.

What about immigrant youth?

* Although a good many of these young Quebecers born of diversity express themselves in French, they do not perceive the relationship between language and social cohesion in the same way as other youth. In 2012 the Comité consultatif Jeunes, a body funded by the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail, met with 140 immigrants between the ages of 18 and 35 via focus groups in seven administrative regions of Quebec, in order to identify the barriers to job entry for young first-generation immigrants.
* The committee’s report indicates that young people regard proficiency in French as the key skill to be acquired for successful job entry, but they are frustrated when they see [Translation] “that the English language seems to be systematically required in job offers, although in reality it is not used much in the work context” (CCJ, 2013).
* This reality is particularly evident for allophones who have learned French but are told to become proficient in another language. Depending on the region, it is conversely sub-par proficiency in French that can prove problematic. It should be remembered that, like school, employment is another powerful vector of social cohesion (CSLF, 2008b).
* That said, proficiency in the official languages does not seem to guarantee that young people will be fully accepted in Quebec society. The Francophone Quebec youth born of immigration who were interviewed by the CSFL said that their accent could provoke a form of discrimination, with the result that their interlocutors perceive them as different.
* It appears that these young people who are more specifically multilingual do not see themselves reflected in the current linguistic categorization of Francophone, Anglophone or allophone. Even though these youth [Translation] “do not regard language, or choice of language during interactions, as an identity issue,” they still tend “to follow the language choice of the other person or persons during interactions, and always opt for French when interacting with someone unknown to them” (CSLF, 2015).
* By and large, young neo-Quebecers seem to be the group that is most disposed to learn French. For many of the immigrants interviewed by the CSLF in 2011, the age of 40 seems to be a psychological threshold when “immigrants consider themselves too old to be starting a learning process” (CSLF, 2011).
* In closing, it must be mentioned that it is not because French is the language of integration into Quebec that all youth will automatically support that language. To strengthen social cohesion between the two linguistic groups, conditions of “living together” must be established where learning a language will prove beneficial in terms of [Translation] “upward social mobility, achievement of individual and community potential, and participation in civil society” (CSLF, 2008c). In short, [Translation] “the more contacts there are among members of different groups, the more they will learn to know each other and the less discrimination there will be among them” (Côté and Mettewie, in Magnan, 2012).

Concerns for the future of French

* In step with the requirements of the job market, young people are favourable to bilingualism, and consider proficiency in English as “a sought-after and unavoidable skill in the workplace and in the context of globalization” (CSLF, 2008a).
* For reasons more practical than cultural, it is very likely that young people consider the “language of business and trade” to be an undeniable asset. Nearly 75% of young people in Secondary IV and V interviewed in 2012 by the CLSF think that [Translation] “the best thing that can happen to Quebecers is for all of them to become bilingual.” At the same time, those students demonstrate concern for the future of French: only 13% of them feel that the future of French is assured, whereas 87% regard it as uncertain, if not threatened (CSLF, 2012).
* According to a survey by the Languedutravail.org collective (2017), over one young worker in two considers the protection of the French language in Quebec to be a “very important” issue. That said, it is interesting to note that young people tend to underestimate the proportion of Francophones in the Quebec population, and that that proportion varies, depending on the community, according to both the workplace and the place of residence. More exposed to English than their counterparts in Quebec City, the young people of Montreal have the impression that there are far fewer Francophones than their actual proportion (CSLF, 2012b; 2015).
* As for the source of young people’s concerns about the future of French, the work of the CSLF shows that the threat is no longer “external” but rather “internal”. Today they are more concerned about the importance accorded to French in the public space and its level of mastery by the Quebec population. Young Quebecers are particularly critical of the attitude of their fellow citizens who tend to speak negatively about French and, in turn, never propose anything to promote it. They also criticize the comments in certain media which [Translation] “are constantly presenting the subject of language in a bad light” (CSLF, 2012). This inadequate media coverage of French is also raised in one of the proposals formulated by the 400 young people who participated in the INM’s summer school in 2007, inviting governments to reinvest in public media in order to revitalize French “as the common language” (INM, 2007b). Young people are also rather annoyed by the poor quality of the French spoken by Quebecers. The future of the language is not under threat from accents or regionalisms, but rather from anglicisms. Over 80% of youth in Secondary IV and V feel they have a personal role to play in this situation. In addition to proscribing anglicisms, they consider it their duty to pay particular attention to the quality of the language in written communications (CLSF, 2012a).
* Generally speaking, an interesting paradox is evident, that being that French is the vehicle of social success for youth, and yet the economic future lies in English. Gérard Bouchard notes that the younger generations are confronted with the contradiction [Translation] “that makes us love French collectively, but also makes us bank on English individually” (*Le Devoir*, June 23, 2012).