Ambivalence About Communicating in a Second Language: A Qualitative Study of French Immersion Students' Willingness to Communicate

PETER D. MACINTYRE
Cape Breton University
Department of Psychology
P.O. Box 5300
Sydney, NS, Canada B1P 6L2
Email: peter_macintyre@cbu.ca

CAROLYN BURNS
Cape Breton University
Department of Psychology
P.O. Box 5300
Sydney, NS, Canada B1P 6L2
Email: carolynmburns@hotmail.com

ALISON JESSOME
Cape Breton University
Department of Psychology
P.O. Box 5300
Sydney, NS, Canada B1P 6L2
Email: alison_jessome@hotmail.com

The defining feature of immersion language learning is the omnipresent pressure to communicate in the second language (L2), even as incipient skills are being acquired. This study uses the focused essay technique to investigate ambivalence about communicating among adolescent French immersion students (12–14 years of age). Students described situations in which they were most willing to communicate (241 entries received) and situations in which they were least willing to communicate (179 entries received). Responses reveal complex interrelations among linguistic development, L2 self-development, and the nonlinguistic issues that typically face adolescents. Most frequently, students discussed communication with teachers and friends in a school context, but other entries described situations outside the classroom, with extended family or encounters with media. Perceived competence and error correction were identified as major issues. Students also described feeling excluded or mocked because of their status as immersion students, but at other times they used language to form a secret club to exclude or poke fun at other people. Although we found substantial similarities between situations in which students are most or least willing to communicate, they can be differentiated by subtle changes in context that affect the authenticity of communication and needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

ACQUIRING THE ABILITY TO COMMUNI-CATE in a second language (L2) is a complex process that features a dynamic interplay between the language learning context and the psychology of the learner. Immersion education and content-based learning (Lyster, 2007) are particularly interesting pedagogical approaches because, in addition to their effects on L2 learning (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Genesee, 1987; see also de Courcy, 2002) and communication (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), being an ado-

lescent immersed in another language has the potential to exert powerful effects on the learner's concept of self. The centrality of the demand to use the L2 in immersion classrooms highlights the need to understand the psychological processes that underlie L2 communication. These processes create ambivalent states of mind in which young immersion students feel both willing and unwilling to communicate in the target language (MacIntyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009a). Although this runs counter to the notion of a bipolar continuum, where on the one end a person is completely unwilling to communicate and on the other end 100% willing, research is in the early stages of understanding the notion of ambivalent attitudes, particularly among adolescents (Zhao & Cappella, 2008).

In this study we will examine young (12–14 years of age), English-speaking Canadian students in a French immersion program. Unlike parts of Canada where immersion education must navigate the issues surrounding multilingual classrooms (Cummins, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 2005), the students in the present study live in a predominantly Anglophone community (Cape Breton County). This area has low levels of immigration and a stable population base. According to 2006 census data (Nova Scotia Community Counts, 2009), 95% of the population of the county lists English as their first language (L1; less than 1% list French as their L1) and only 4.3% of residents have sufficient knowledge of French to hold a conversation. However, there are sizable French-speaking communities in neighbouring counties. Inverness County has approximately 15% who list French as their L1, and Richmond County has approximately 25% with French as the L1. Therefore, the extended families of the students may include French-speaking relatives. The data for this study come from descriptions of situations in which French immersion students were most willing and situations in which they were most unwilling to use their L2 (French), either outside or inside the classroom. A qualitative analysis of these situations provides a window into the thought processes of the students and highlights numerous interconnected and sometimes conflicted features of the learner, the communication context, and immersion pedagogy.

ORIGINS OF IMMERSION

The origins of French immersion in Canada can be traced to Montreal in 1965 (LaPlante, 2001). The program was initiated at the request of a group of Anglophone parents who approached the school board with an idea of having their children taught exclusively in French. By immersing their children in the French language, the parents hoped that their children would become functionally bilingual. At the time, Canada was officially marking itself as a bilingual country (Rebuffot, 1993), and the immersion experiment became the subject of much debate. The project was overseen by a team of psychologists led by Wallace Lambert, who drew upon various domains of psychology in an attempt to create an environment conducive to the goal of creating a bilingual Anglophone student (Carey, 1984) willing and able to communicate in French.

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

The founders of immersion education understood that the experience fully engages the psychology of the individual learner. Although attitude (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992; Pearson, 2007), motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003), anxiety (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2003), aptitude (Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; Kiss & Nikolov, 2005), and other learner variables have been studied over the years, the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so can be defined most specifically using the concept Willingness to Communicate (WTC). MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) defined WTC as a state of readiness to engage in the L2, the culmination of processes that prepare the learner to initiate L2 communication with a specific person at a specific time. The notion of WTC integrates psychological, linguistic, educational, and communicative dimensions of language that typically have been studied independently of each other. However, for students in L2 immersion programs, these dimensions of language are not at all separate; rather, they are integrated as features of the students' experience. Cognitive and emotional processes converge within the student to affect learning in important and possibly contradictory ways (MacIntyre et al., 2009a). This means that there will be times when students experience high WTC and other times when those same students are unwilling to communicate (UnWTC).

The focus on the psychology that underlies communication promotes a consideration of processes that begin well before the interlocutors utter any sounds at all. Indeed, an exclusive focus on the linguistic outcomes of immersion education (see Hammerly, 1987) has the potential to neglect other key features of a communication event and to underestimate the personal and social gains of immersion students (Wesche, 1993). Understanding the origin of L2 communication lies in a series of proximal and distal influences, and it requires a broad sense of time and self to understand the fullness of the process. The pyramid model of WTC in L2 communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998) attempts to capture this idea and to illustrate the factors and processes that might have an impact. The model is organized into six layers, proceeding from the most distal to the most proximal components (see Figure).

At the base of the pyramid are intergroup climate and the personality of the learner, broadly interacting forces that are handed down to the individual, over which they have little influence

FIGURE
The Pyramid Model of WTC
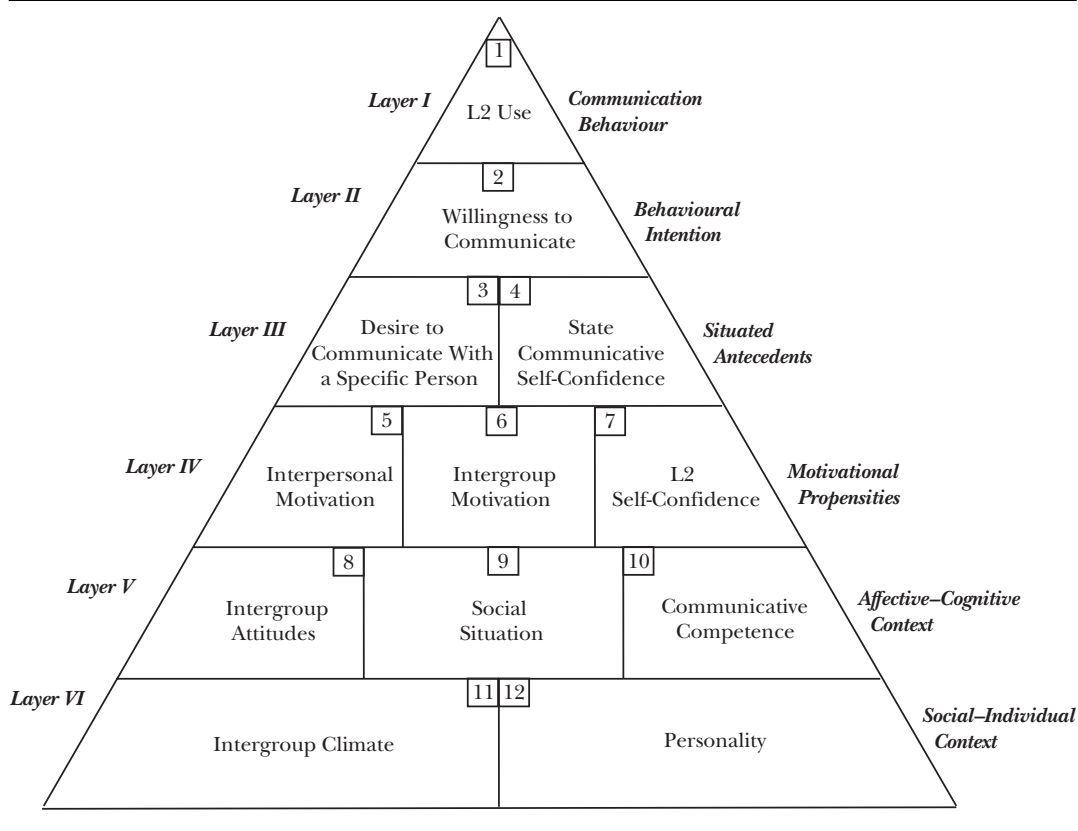
(Coupland, Bishop, Evans, & Garrett 2006; Pedersen, Plomin, McClearn, & Friberg, 1988). Moving to a more proximal level of analysis, the next layer of the pyramid captures the individual's typical affective and cognitive context. Setting the tone for motivation to learn the L2 is the tension between a desire to approach the target language group and a sense of hesitation or fear of the implications of doing so (Clément, 1986; MacIntyre, 2007). The last of the layers of enduring influences shown in the pyramid model are highly specific motives and self-related cognition (see Dörnyei, 2005). Intergroup motives stem directly from membership in a particular social group, and interpersonal motives stem from the social roles one plays within the group. The most basic interpersonal motives deal with issues of affiliation and control, and these are featured prominently in motives for language learning (Gardner, 2002; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000; Ushioda, 2001). The pyramid model proposes that L2 self-confidence, reflected in self-perceptions of communicative competence coupled with a lack

of anxiety, interact with consistent roles and motives encountered in the learner's typical day-to-day experiences.

When we move to the three uppermost layers of the pyramid, we make a transition from enduring influences to situational ones. The sense of time is coming to focus on the here and now. At layer 3 of the pyramid model are two key influences on WTC: (a) the desire to communicate with a specific person and (b) a state of self-confidence, which may or may not be different from the learner's typical self-related cognition. The specific person with whom one is communicating brings unique attributes, including the role that they play (e.g., teacher vs. fellow student), attractiveness as a communication partner, and possibly a shared history, all of which can influence the process of authentic communication for better or worse. The state of self-confidence blends the influences of prior language learning and perceived communicative skills with the motives and anxieties experienced at a particular moment in time into a state of mind broadly

characterized by a tendency to approach or avoid the L2 "right now." The culmination of the processes described in the pyramid model is the willingness to communicate (layer 2), a readiness to initiate L2 discourse on a specific occasion with a specific person. This represents a behavioural intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), freely chosen, to speak if one has the opportunity (MacIntyre, 2007). Dörnyei and Otto (1998; see also Dörnyei, 2005) have likened this to "crossing the Rubicon," a point of no return where one commits to act in the L2 (layer 1). At times, one crosses such a threshold easily, but at other times, one crosses it with reluctance, hesitation, even trepidation. This study asks learners to help us better understand the moments of decision wherein an immersion student is feeling willing or unwilling to speak because, on the one hand, this decision is central to L2 success (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004), but, on the other hand, we will see that there are more than language-related processes in play.

L2 MOTIVATIONAL SELF SYSTEM

The central role of self-confidence in the pyramid model of WTC raises the connection between the self and language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; MacIntyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009b). Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self system deals with language learning goals and experiences phrased in terms of what a person believes they ought to be or what they fear they will become. Adding to the complexity of these self-related processes is the stage of life-span development of the immersion students in our study. The participants are adolescents (approximately 12–14 years of age), experiencing a variety of internal and external influences on their emerging identity, including their situated identity as an immersion student (see Clément & Noels, 2001; Damji, Clément, & Noels, 1996). Adolescents are at a developmental stage wherein they are cultivating the ability for abstract thought, incorporating their responses to events as well as personal traits into their concept of self (Santrock, 2005). Adolescence is described as a constant state of flux, with little consistency in self-awareness. Jacobs, Bleeker, and Constantino (2003) explained that the inconsistency of personal traits can actually cause distress to the adolescent, creating a state of confusion with respect to identifying their true nature. Sigelman (1999) discovered that academic achievement tends to decline during adolescence. This trend results from a variety of fac-

tors, such as negative feedback during the educational process, the biological as well as social developmental impact of puberty, and expanding cognitive ability to assess their own abilities. We must keep in mind that adolescence itself has the potential to affect immersion students and their L2 learning.

The development of self does not take place in a vacuum. The students in our study were enrolled in a French immersion program, in which they formed an identifiable enclave within a larger, overwhelmingly Anglophone school and local community, but within a very large, bilingual country. This *immersion identity* may be a source of concern, as students struggle with a sense of belonging over and above the typical adolescent process of constructing present and possible future selves. Abrams and Hogg (1999) noted that a larger social frame, including sociocultural norms, intergroup interactions, cultural integration, and occasional cultural conflicts, will have an impact on students' sense of self and identity.

In his research, Lamb (2004) explored the ongoing process of identity formation among Indonesian adolescents learning English as an L2. He found that developing identity was an integral part of the learning experience, with the student's own cultural identity clashing with the perceived global identity of an English speaker. The students desired an understanding of the global world and its inhabitants but also wanted to retain a separate and distinct identity that they would utilize within their personal social surroundings—in essence trying to have a space in both worlds. The experience of bicultural identity carries, at times, a state of confusion, when the global identity comes into conflict with the personal (local) identity, possibly resulting in a temporary loss of interest in the learning process. Although not framed in terms of globalization, our students' account of their immersion identity shares several elements with those of Lamb's research participants. In their life outside of school, our students live almost entirely as Anglophone citizens; for them, the French language primarily is associated with communication within the immediate classroom setting and with future possibilities. Dörnyei (2001, pp. 13–14) described the challenge of *parallel multiplicity*, which in the present study means that the students have multiple actions and reactions happening at one time (see also MacIntyre, 2007). How, then, does an adolescent immersion student deal with this overload, integrating internal and external pressures for L2 communication, academic success, interpersonal relationships, contested identities,

and so on? Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 1985, 2000) provides some insight into the underlying goals of the learners.

Self-determination theory is very much grounded in the concept of choice and how humans seek out challenges that direct personal growth. The most interesting actions a person undertakes are those that are freely chosen; those actions reveal details about the person and how they choose to fit into their environment. Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed three key, universal human needs: competence (Harter, 1978; White, 1963), relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Reis, 1994), and autonomy (de Charms, 1968; Deci, 1975). When these needs converge, behaviour is self-determined and intrinsically motivated, enhancing the learning experience (Bonney, Cortina, Smith-Darden, & Fiori, 2008). The immersion classroom challenges students' sense of autonomy by placing strong constraints on communication and, therefore, their self-expression. However, extrinsically motivated actions can evolve to become self-determined if the individual in question comes to identify with, accept, and internalize the regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). If the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are met, a once-extrinsic motivator can become integrated with the individual's sense of self and purpose.

The ongoing transition between extrinsic and intrinsic motives often makes the distinction between them very blurry in practice. Just as students might adopt both instrumental and integrative reasons for language learning (Gardner, 2002; MacIntyre, MacMaster, & Baker, 2001), Bonney et al. (2008) found that motives for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are often positively correlated and are not necessarily mutually exclusive, especially in learning contexts. This suggests that the immersion students in our study will experience a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motives that influence their L2 learning and communication, as is evident in Lamb's (2004) research.

The present study is an attempt to better describe the dynamics of the processes underlying WTC among immersion students. We asked Anglophone L2 learners to discuss situations in which they were most willing and least willing to communicate. By doing so, they were able to express their feelings about the contexts in which they are acquiring and using French as an L2, thereby giving us a window into personal, social, and situational experiences that drive or inhibit WTC.

METHOD

Materials

The study was conducted over a 6-week period. Students completed a questionnaire at the beginning of the study. This questionnaire included information on the students' linguistic background and their frequency of communicating in French. Language learning orientations were assessed with a modified version of Clément and Kruidenier's (1983) orientation index (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001). The index revealed that the students endorsed a variety of reasons for language learning, which included that learning French would enhance their employment opportunities (88%), broaden their travel opportunities (84%), enable them to meet more French-speaking people (84%), enable them to communicate with French Canadians (75%), and help them understand French speakers, their culture, and community better (73%).

Students also completed a journal. Using the focused essay technique (see MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), students were asked to provide up to six situations in which they were most willing to communicate in French and six situations in which they were least willing to communicate in French. Responses were written in a specially formatted 8.5 × 11-inch spiral-bound diary. Students held the diaries for 6 weeks but were not obligated to write something every week. We received 241 entries for situations in which they were most willing to communicate and 179 entries for situations in which they were least willing to communicate. In each diary entry, students were asked to describe with whom they were conversing, where the conversation took place, and how they felt about the experience. The questions were presented in English and all but 2 students responded in English.

Participants

Participants were 100 junior high school students in Grades 7, 8, and 9 (12–14 years of age) enrolled in a French immersion program. The school that they attended did not teach exclusively using French immersion but also provided the provincial junior high school programs in English. Therefore, each student had daily interaction in both French and English, with immersion and nonimmersion students and teachers.

The French-language background of the participants was varied. Over 24% had immediate family members who spoke at least some French at home and 48% of the students' extended family, including grandparents, aunts, and uncles, spoke at least some French. Among the students' social network, including peers, teachers, and neighbours, 68% of the students had contact with people who spoke at least some French.

Coding Process

Each of the diaries was typed verbatim into one of two electronic documents—one for "Most Willing" and one for "Least Willing" situations. All identifying information (except an identification number, age, and grade level) was then removed. The diary entries were grouped by the second author into major themes. Our original intent was to describe those themes in detail to illustrate the types of situations that produced high WTC and those that produced low WTC, using the pyramid model (MacIntyre et al., 1998) as a guide. As noted in the next section, it quickly became apparent that this approach would not be suited to the data at hand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are various situations in which immersion students reported being most willing to communicate and least willing to communicate. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the trends in the data and provide an overview of the diary corpus. Our original analytic strategy was to use the pyramid model to organize the entries and interpret the themes written by the students. However, a comparison of the entries in Tables 1 and 2 shows considerable similarity between situations that increase and situations that decrease WTC. Students are both willing *and* unwilling to speak with family, friends, teachers, and strangers. Learners wrote that they are both willing *and* unwilling to speak with students whose French skills are less advanced or more advanced. Diary entries showed that the students are both willing *and* unwilling to receive error correction or to use French media. In short, we see evidence of ambivalence among the students as a group. For this reason, we have integrated the results and discussion of the data for WTC and UnWTC to highlight the sometimes subtle difference between a context that increases and one that decreases WTC. We selected 56 entries from 36 different students to illustrate the content of the diaries. The direct quotes from the students have been indented and set in italics. All

TABLE 1
Diary Entries: Willingness to Communicate

Situation	No. of Entries
In class, to immersion students, for class projects, to follow norm	44
To friends, immersion friends, to show off to friends	38
With family, French-speaking family, to showcase skills learned	33
To a friend, to friend on phone	32
To exclude others	29
To teacher, to noncritical teacher	24
Entertainment, reading popular book, listening to radio, watching TV, using Internet	16
To other French speakers	8
When confident of answer	6
To teach a sibling, to help another student	5
When alone	3
In public, to stranger, to English speaker who will not notice mistake	3
Total Willingness Entries	241

diary entries presented are complete, as written, except for the removal of names or other identifying information.

The data provide a rich collection of situations. The most prominent context mentioned in the diary entries was communicating at school with the teacher and peers, where issues of perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness emerged as key themes. Many of the diary entries also described communication outside of school, with family, friends, or strangers, and media usage.

Both the pyramid model (MacIntyre et al., 1998) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) will be used to understand the psychological processes underlying the diary entries. The themes discussed below emerged from the data and are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive (see Bonney et al., 2008) but are intended to broadly capture the major elements of Tables 1 and 2.

The Teacher and Peers in the Classroom/School Context

Students reported that the situation in which they feel most willing to communicate in French is in the immersion classroom setting, or with fellow immersion students, for a variety of reasons (see Table 1). As use of English in the immersion classroom is actively discouraged, the students clearly associate the classroom environment with French

TABLE 2
Diary Entries: Unwillingness to Communicate

Situation	No. of Entries
When it is easier to communicate in English, work is difficult, unsure of answer, put on the spot, afraid of mistakes, with a friend who corrects	21
To strangers in public	19
In lunchroom or in hallway	17
Speaking in front of family at home	16
Speaking with English friends, friends on the phone, friends in class	15
To teacher or in hallway to teacher	12
Speaking in front of family for show, or in front of others for show	11
With nonimmersion students, or those who do not understand	11
During free time, off-time, sports	11
When in English class, when learning other subjects	10
Reading aloud or presenting in class	9
With French speakers (nonfamily) or more advanced students	7
Speaking specifically in front of French-speaking family	6
When writing, corresponding, writing tests, or working on projects	5
When upset or not feeling well	4
When listening to music	2
When in a group	2
When told must only use French	1
Total Unwillingness Entries	179

communication. Within the diary entries were comments indicative of both extrinsic and intrinsic motives, as well as all three needs underlying self-determination (competence, relatedness, and autonomy).

1. WTC: When participating in a health project (group) it felt okay to speak French because it was a French surrounded situation. (ID 102, age 14, Grade 9)

By indicating that it feels okay to speak French, we see the suggestion of intrinsic motivation; the student accepts that he/she uses French in class. This comment seems to reflect an internalization of the regulation present in the school situation, consistent with Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory; that is, if it feels okay to speak French, the student indicates an acceptance of the external demands on a personal, emotional level. There were other entries that showed students attributing French use to more extrinsic motives:

2. WTC: I was most willing to talk French to my friends and teachers in class because if we talk English we will get in trouble. (ID 233, age 13, Grade 8)

This student is willing to use French but for externally regulated reasons. It is interesting that this entry was offered as a situation in which the student felt most willing to communicate, suggesting that externally driven reasons for language learning can be effective motivators (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Ushioda, 2001).

At other times, the students felt uncomfortable speaking French in the school, as when strict communication requirements of the immersion program constrain feelings of autonomy.

3. UnWTC: In the halls with my friends because what I say in the halls is MY BUSINESS. (ID 283, age 13, Grade 8)

4. UnWTC: At lunch when I was in the halls (speaking English) I was confronted by a teacher who said it was a French wing. It upset me to think that they can tell me, on my time off from French, I have to speak it. (ID 102, age 14, Grade 9)

Challenges to the students' sense of autonomy may contribute to a perceived need for individuality, as many students seem to struggle with the immersion identity. They reported difficulty negotiating a sense of personal identity vis-à-vis their role as an immersion student. In some contexts, the adolescent learners said they were embarrassed at being identified as an immersion student by peers or in public.

5. UnWTC: In the halls because there's more than just French immersion students. (ID 286, age 13, Grade 8)

6. UnWTC: I felt uncomfortable using French usually in the halls, the cafeteria, etc. I feel as though people think I am trying to show off. I know other people's opinion shouldn't matter but my friends and I seem to have come to an unspoken, undiscussed agreement not to speak French outside of the classroom. (ID 268, age 13, Grade 8)

7. UnWTC: In front of people who think French immersion students are nerds. (ID 373, age 12, Grade 7)

8. UnWTC: Well, a few weeks ago all the immersion students were told to speak French in the halls and cafeteria meaning we were only allowed to speak English when we were with non-immersion students and outside. But I don't think we should have to speak French because it gets confusing when we leave school and go home because we start speaking French and nobody in my family speaks French. Even my English marks went down since I've been in immersion and my spelling isn't very good in English (or French). (ID 239, age 14, Grade 8)

9. UnWTC: Me and my friends were walking down the hall. Most of my friends were in English. My teacher came out of the room and started talking to me. My friends started looking at me. I just said something small to my teacher and left. I was unwilling because my friends were like thinking I was trying to kiss up to my teacher. I felt really weird and they were laughing at me and making fun of me. (ID 376, age 12, Grade 7)

Within the pyramid model of WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998), *social situation* refers not only to the physical location of interaction but also other elements of the interaction, including the participants in the social exchange. A situation in which a young language learner feels subject to the ridicule of his or her friends has a strong potential to divert attention to self-protection motives because social acceptance is one of the most salient motives for adolescents (Olthof & Goossens, 2008; Ullrich-French & Smith, 2007). At times, however, the students cross the Rubicon mindlessly and only later notice that they had voluntarily been speaking French when the context did not require it (MacIntyre, 2007).

10. WTC: When I was in the hall I started to speak French and my friend said "You don't have to speak French anymore." But later we did speak French. I felt very silly. (ID 312, age 12, Grade 7)

In this example, feeling silly might be a function of the transition between external and internal regulation of language choice. As the reasons for language learning become more internalized, students experience changes in their emotional reactions. The immersion student has constant pressure on his or her sense of identity, spurred on by the social circumstances in which he or she is placed.

External regulation of the rules of immersion is enforced in the classroom by the teachers, who have the potential at any moment to increase or decrease WTC among the students. From opposite ends of the spectrum we have the following two examples:

11. UnWTC: In class when I do not understand a question the teacher asks me. I feel so stupid. (ID 997, age 12, Grade 7)

12. WTC: In every situation I felt comfortable speaking French but I felt most willing to in my Math class because my Math teacher is not one to criticize. (ID 359, age 12, Grade 7)

When referring to or naming a specific teacher, as opposed to making general reference to immersion teachers, many of our students felt unwilling to communicate, unless the teacher was viewed as being noncritical:

13. WTC: One particular time where I felt most willing to speak French was with my teacher. I felt comfortable talking with my teacher because she understands if I get my words mixed up or don't know a word, so that also makes me more confident. We were talking about science. (ID 249, age 13, Grade 8)

14. UnWTC: Asking my French teacher a question because I thought I would make a mistake talking to her and she would say I couldn't speak good for my grade. (ID 122, age 14, Grade 9)

de Courcy (2002) found that students who were struggling with feelings of frustration with the L2 learning process tended to feel negatively about their teachers. If we examine this frustration through the lens of self-determination theory, the teacher often limits the autonomy of the learners simply through typical classroom management, by requiring L2 projects and testing within a course, and by constraining the use of the students' L1 inside and sometimes outside the classroom. Using the terminology from the pyramid model, the teacher's role is to exert some external control over student behaviour, placing constraints on their freedom (broadly defined) and enforcing school policies of language use.

Students and their teachers also form long-lasting relationships that satisfy the need for relatedness while building language competence, so it is not surprising that students describe many ways in which their teachers affect WTC. Many of the entries simply indicated that the student is generally willing to talk to his or her teacher, without providing further contextual detail. Several students reported on specific ways in which the teacher enhanced WTC.

15. WTC: I felt most willing when the teacher asked me to help someone understand their work better. I did feel very needed and that I was of greater assistance. (ID 113, age 14, Grade 9)

16. WTC: This past week, I felt very willing to talk to my homeroom teacher in French. I was in the classroom and we were talking about dancing. I had to communicate in French because I'm in French Immersion. I was pretty comfortable speaking to her because this is my 2nd year in immersion and I feel I can speak well to my teachers now. (ID 279, age 13, Grade 8)

17. WTC: I was in social studies class and I had the answer to one [of my teacher's] tough questions and nobody else in the room knew the answer. I had the right answer too! My teacher congratulated me and I felt really good and most willing to speak French. (ID 329, age 12, Grade 7)

In general, feedback from the teacher is critical to student success, motivation, and WTC. The students in our study wrote often about their reactions to error correction from the teacher (see Lyster, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). It is not possible to draw a general inference, such as "error correction reduces WTC," because the data do not support such a generalization (see also Loewen et al., 2009) nor do the data support the opposite generalization.

18. WTC: I was most willing to use French when I had to ask the vice principal if there was a place where I could do homework and study until my mom picked me up. I said it in French because the vice principal speaks French and encourages the students in French Immersion to speak in French when talking to him. I felt ok after I made a mistake because he just corrected me. He understood me well and it worked out ok. (ID 353, age 13, Grade 7)

19. UnWTC: In my French classes when the teacher ask [sic] me something I don't really like responding in French fearful that I will make a mistake. (ID 382, 11, Grade 7)

20. UnWTC: I feel unwilling during social studies because my teacher makes fun of my mistakes. (ID 382, 11, Grade 7)

21. UnWTC: I was having a conversation with one of my teachers and all she does is correct me in every little tiny mistake I make and I feel uncomfortable when I talk to teachers in French. (ID 215, age 14, Grade 8)

As Kang (2005) has noted, the methods of delivering error correction, whether it is welcomed by the student in context, and the relationship with the teacher converge to affect WTC.

Error Correction and Peer Mentoring

When the error correction comes from peers, the situation is perceived as different. In principle, error correction from peers may increase or decrease WTC, depending on contextual factors. However, in an ordinary conversation between friends (e.g., in the native language), correction of grammar, word choice, accent, and so on is not usually anticipated and, in some cases, is clearly unwelcome.

22. WTC: When I was with my friends at recess in the French classroom I didn't care and neither did my friends care if I made a mistake. They would not laugh or go and tell everyone they would just tell me and I would rather that they tell me so I would know for the next time. (ID 215, age 14, Grade 8)

23. WTC: I am normally most willing to talk to my friends in French because if I make a mistake they don't correct me. (ID 126, age 14, Grade 8)

24. UnWTC: To my friend in grade 6. He teases me if I make a mistake. (ID 350, age 12, Grade 7)

25. UnWTC: This week I was on recycling and collecting the blueboxes but when I went to the French classes I decided not to speak in case I messed up a word in front of my friends. (ID 411, age 14, Grade 9)

Error correction from peers is not universally a negative experience. In discussing limitations to their study, Loewen et al. (2009) proposed that the context in which error correction is provided greatly affects how it is interpreted. We found that in some relationships, error correction is welcomed and treated as a friend or sibling being helpful.

26. WTC: I felt most willing to talk French when I was in my parent's room with [my sister]. We were just talking about my school and stuff. We were talking in French because I had asked her to, because I like talking with her because she'll help me with words and won't get angry at me if I say them wrong. I felt very comfortable talking with her. (ID 398, age 13, Grade 7)

As MacIntyre et al. (2003) found, the perception of support increases confidence. In this study, we find that being supportive of others also increases confidence and WTC. In the diaries, several students reported feeling empowered when they were provided with an opportunity to be a mentor to a sibling or others at a lower language level than themselves:

27. WTC: I was helping a grade 7 who was just learning to speak French and I felt that she liked to hear me speak French even if some of it was wrong. (ID 215, age 14, Grade 8)

28. WTC: I was most willing to use French this week with my family and friends. Sometimes my sister and I talk French about school and other things. I have an exchange student staying at my house, from France. She helps me sometimes with my homework. (ID 307, age 12, Grade 7)

In summary, students in these situations are acting as mentors, even if on an informal basis. Mentoring, or being mentored, was a powerful theme within our students' diary entries. However, it is clear that the context in which mentoring is done can change quickly from positive to negative. In relationships in which error correction is featured, subtle affirmation of competence and displays of autonomy support help to maintain interpersonal harmony.

Control Motives and the Secret Club

For some, the French language contributes to establishing an autonomous identity, a sort of secret club (see Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In this

sense, the immersion identity can have its bene-
fits. Several of the adolescent learners wrote about
speaking French at home, and occasionally in
public, to exert control over who could under-
stand their conversation. The expressed goal was
to exclude people who could overhear the con-
versation from understanding it. Peer communi-
cation and secrecy is a fundamental part of ado-
lescent development of autonomy:

*29. WTC: When me and [my best friend were] talking on
the phone. We didn't want our parents to hear or know
what we were talking about . . . I was most willing to speak
French with [my friend] because I didn't want my parents
to know. [She] was too. (ID 376, age 12, Grade 7)*

*30. WTC: I was talking to my friends at my sister's house,
we were talking about a guy. We were talking in French
because that guy was there and he doesn't know French
and it was fun trying to talk in French. I felt like I was
having fun, and I felt that I had learned quite a bit of
French. (ID 341, age 12, Grade 7)*

Although the founders of immersion programs
might not have had this type of language use sit-
uation in mind, from the perspective of the pyra-
mid model the students have met the two ma-
jor antecedents for L2 communication: having a
feeling of self-confidence (i.e., *state self-confidence*)
and the desire to speak to a specific person for
authentic communication. Using the French lan-
guage to exclude others might be especially at-
tractive to adolescents and their developing sense
of self-determination because it satisfies both affil-
iation and control motives and may enhance the
sense of autonomy.

In our data, adolescents appeared to exert con-
trol in social situations by framing the commu-
nication in terms of joking or teasing. Several of
the diary entries indicated that the students used
French to gain the upper hand in conversation
or to have fun at someone else's expense. These
might be the clearest examples of a relatively pure
control motive (MacIntyre et al., 1998):

*31. WTC: The time I was most willing to speak French
was when I was talking to my bus driver, because he didn't
understand what I was saying and it was making him
mad. (ID 107, age 14, Grade 9)*

*32. WTC: I was talking to my aunt just fooling with her
head. I was talking about a bunch of different things. (ID
302, age 12, Grade 7)*

*33. WTC: I was sitting down talking to my sister in French.
She doesn't speak French so it was funny. (ID 181, age 14,
Grade 9)*

The strategy used by this student (ID 181) took
an unexpected turn in another context:

*34. WTC: I was walking down the street and I started to
talk to a stranger in French for a joke. But it turned out
the stranger talked French too and we had an interesting
conversation. (ID 181, age 14, Grade 9)*

Although further research would be required to
confirm it, our sense is that communicating in
the L2 as a way of having fun at someone else's
expense might be a feature of adolescent commu-
nication. It is more difficult to imagine an adult
language learner deliberately speaking the L2 to
annoy a bus driver. However, it is easy to imagine
control motives creating a sort of language club
among learners of any age.

Perceived Competence

Using one's language skill to exclude others has
the potential to generate positive feelings, but be-
lieving that one has superior language skill does
not always lead to satisfactory communication.
The desire to have authentic communication with
a specific person can be taken to imply that the
interlocutor can hold up his or her end of the con-
versation. There were instances among the entries
when WTC was reduced by the perceived compe-
tence of an interlocutor.

*35. UnWTC: I am very unwilling to use French talking to
my friends because I know a lot more French than some of
my friends. I am more advanced because I [have] known
French since grade 5. (ID 258, age 13, Grade 8)*

Frustration can occur when a student is communi-
cating with a fellow student whose learning stage
is not as advanced. However, the reverse also was
found, as when conversing with a peer who is more
advanced:

*36. UnWTC: When talking to somebody at a higher level
of French than me, it makes me feel stupid. (ID 368, age
12, Grade 8)*

It seems that the students' ability to feel secure
in the relationship with the other person is a ma-
jor concern and a key influence on WTC. Kang
(2005) expanded on the notion of security by in-
cluding linguistic knowledge as a key element.
Kang found that when students felt unsure of a
topic, they were less likely to engage in discussion
about that topic:

*37. UnWTC: I hate talking French in math class because it
is already too hard to understand. (ID 997, age 12, Grade
7)*

*38. UnWTC: I felt very unwilling to use French when I
was doing a presentation in front of the class . . . We com-
municated in French because it was a French presentation.
I felt embarrassed because I don't like talking in front of
lots of people. (ID 113, age 14, Grade 9)*

The student appears to suggest that public speaking anxiety or more general communication apprehension might be exerting an influence in the classroom. It would be interesting to know whether this student also feels reluctant to speak in front of classmates in the L1, as well (see Donovan & MacIntyre, 2005). If so, this reluctance to speak would not be tied to language but to a personality-based disposition to avoid public communication.

Public communication, in the form of classroom presentations, was highlighted as an occasion generating high or low WTC. Several students indicated that they welcomed the opportunity to speak or make a presentation in class.

> 39. WTC: When I was in social studies class and I did a really good presentation (for the project we had to do). (ID 329, age 12, Grade 7)

> 40. WTC: I think [I] felt most willing when I was presenting a French project. I felt comfortable because other people made mistakes also. (ID 382, age 11, Grade 7)

These two examples are both related to classroom presentations, but from different perspectives. The notion that a presentation was "really good" stems from the perception of communicative competence. The second excerpt, referring to the mistakes made by other students, is an interesting example of how WTC depends on the situation. The implication seems to be that if the other presentations were excellent or if no other presentations were available for comparison, WTC would have been lowered by the mistakes the student (ID 382) made. As it stands, the available comparisons with others allowed the student to maintain a sense of relative competence, which leads to an enhanced feeling of (state) self-confidence. If the available comparisons leave a student feeling less competent than those around her or him, they can become unwilling to communicate, even if they are confident in their ability:

> 41. UnWTC: I was at a drama presentation (a French presentation) and they would ask questions. If you got it right, you could win a really nice prize. I knew the answers to almost all the questions but since the drama group already knew how to speak French I was scared to say anything (the drama group was grade nine students). (ID 215, age 14, Grade 8)

Context is clearly influential in raising or lowering WTC at a specific moment. Even if a student feels competent in being able to answer a question, the feeling of willingness to answer that question is another matter. This entry points to social comparison processes that create the sense of competence relative to the others in the conversation, on the

fly. Although students can define their typical level of competence or be objectively assessed, at least at the early stages of language learning, situated WTC seems to involve a continuous assessment of relative competence.

Outside the Classroom: Family and Friends

The data revealed that the largest context that promoted WTC outside the classroom was communicating with friends, closely followed by communication with family. Many learners felt comfortable speaking or using French with friends and family, but there also were students who were unwilling in similar circumstances. In some cases, the same student reported both WTC and UnWTC with family:

> 42. WTC: I was very willing to use French when my mother asked me to tell her what something meant that was in French. I felt kind of happy to be able to help. (ID 113, age 14, Grade 9)

> 43. UnWTC: I felt very unwilling when my dad asked me to translate something off the TV, but they were speaking some slang, I couldn't understand them, so I felt like I had let him down. (ID 113, age 14, Grade 9)

These experiences reveal ambivalence at the individual level as well as the tension between WTC and self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Communicating on these occasions increased or decreased the student's feelings of language ability, and this perception was significantly coloured by the existing relationship with family ("I felt kind of happy to be able to help" vs. "I felt like I had let him down"). These entries clearly blend the motives for competence and relatedness because in these contexts, the ability to use French is tied to being helpful to one's parents.

Family dynamics were featured prominently in other diary entries. A recurrent theme throughout students' diaries was home life and how encouraging and supportive families made them feel more confident when using the L2 language outside of the school setting. For example:

> 44. WTC: I was most willing to use French when I was riding in the car with my mom. We just talked about what was for supper, etc. I feel ok speaking French at home or with relatives because a lot of them speak French. They know I'm learning and don't laugh if I make a mistake. I feel comfortable because I know they're here to support me. (ID 353, age 13, Grade 7)

Requests from families are not always viewed as welcome, however. Some of the students felt uncomfortable speaking French in front of their

family if the request by family was interpreted as demanding a performance:

> *45. UnWTC: This week my parents had friends over but when they learned I was in French immersion they said "Say something in French!" I felt nervous, and said "no." (ID 411, age 14, Grade 9)*

> *46. UnWTC: When my parents wanted me to speak French in front of their friends who were French, I felt nervous. (ID 359, age 12, Grade 7)*

> *47. UnWTC: My dad's side of the family is Acadian and my dad's aunt was visiting my mom said "come show them your French." I was really embarrassed so all I said was "Bonjour, au revoir" and I left. (ID 354, age 13, Grade 7)*

The difference between encounters that raise and those that lower WTC can be subtle and may be a function of the degree of autonomy support in context. Even if the request to "say something in French" was borne of parental pride, it demands inauthentic communication; that is, there is not a desire to communicate in French with the specific persons (MacIntyre et al., 1998). With desire for communication absent, the young student experiences anxiety, a decline in (state) self-confidence, and UnWTC. In this case, a subtle change to a more autonomy-supporting request (e.g., "Tell us about your day, in French") might be more welcome, provided the request makes communicative sense. When the communication is authentic, we observed higher WTC among the learners:

> *48. WTC: I felt most willing to speak French when I was talking to my grand-mother. I was at her house and she asked me how I did on my report card, how I was doing in school because I don't get to see her that much. I was communicating in French because I would rather talk to my grandmother in French. (ID 252, age 13, Grade 8)*

> *49. WTC: For the first time since I started immersion my grandparents who speak French were around and I enjoyed speaking to them (or trying to) in French. (ID 346, age 12, Grade 7)*

> *50. WTC: I never knew my grandparents knew French. Boy are they good. It happened when I needed help in [social studies] my grandma said I'll help. (ID 258, age 13, Grade 8)*

The diary entries regularly featured conversations with grandparents, both among the WTC and UnWTC entries. A familial connection to the French language, which increases the possibility for authentic communication, is made more likely by these students living in a bilingual country. The key point is that even though family members provide opportunities to use French, those opportunities might be viewed as a positive or negative experience in the eyes of the student.

Media Usage

The final area in the diaries that has not been touched upon thus far is the learners' use of French media. WTC includes not only speaking but also reading, writing, and comprehension of spoken language. The latter three language skills are featured prominently when students access the media (movies, television, Internet, etc.).

> *51. WTC: I was most willing to talk French when watching T.V. (the news) because I understood what I was saying and what the newsman was saying. (ID 258, age 13, Grade 8)*

> *52. WTC: This week, I was most willing to use French when I was with my family. I watched a French movie on T.V. with my sister and exchange student. I understood a lot of what they were saying. (ID 307, age 12, Grade 7)*

> *53. WTC: This week if I watched TV & I was watching hockey games. As it goes on it gets easier to speak/listen/read/write French. I'm happy in immersion. (ID 360, age 12, Grade 7)*

> *54. WTC: French WWW page reading all the stuff & telling my brother what they meant. (ID 158, age 14, Grade 9)*

> *55. UnWTC: Two nights ago me and a whole bunch of friends went to a movie and someone in the movie spoke French and I didn't know what it said but everyone kept on asking me. (ID 206, age 13, Grade 8)*

These encounters with media feature authentic communication, for intrinsically motivated reasons (such as enjoyment and interest). On the one hand, the WTC entries highlight the importance of state perceived competence and the feeling that one understands what is happening as the situation unfolds. On the other hand, in the UnWTC example, repeated requests to translate movie dialog alters the role played by the diary author, who becomes a conduit for information flow. Rather than simply enjoying the movie as a participant in the experience, the learner also is cast in the role of interpreter, helping others enjoy the activity. Developing the linguistic competence to serve as a cultural interpreter, either willingly or unwillingly, reinforces the notion that the media itself occupies an ambivalent place in the language learning process, potentially serving both assimilation and pluralism (Clément, Baker, Josephson, & Noels, 2005).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The WTC and UnWTC diaries provided a number of interesting comments on the language learning and communication process as experienced by adolescent learners in French

immersion. Arguably, the key implication drawn from the diaries is that the situations in which learners are most willing to communicate are not radically different from those in which they are least willing. Subtle features of the learner or the context can lead a student to speak up or remain quiet, and the psychological situation can change rapidly. It might be helpful for teachers to approach students as if they lived in a state of ambivalence toward learning—experiencing both reasons to approach and reasons to avoid speaking the L2 (MacIntyre, 2007). In writing about ambivalence in the language learning process, MacIntyre et al. (2009a) commented that "ambivalence of the learner's psychological experience stems from several processes running simultaneously, often without the learner's explicit awareness" (p. 17).

Both self-determination theory and the pyramid model have been useful in writing the present interpretation of the experiences described by the immersion students. From the perspective of the pyramid model, the diary entries highlight the need for authentic communication with specific people. The students wrote about the importance of feeling self-confident, and we see clear examples of both affiliation and control motives. From a self-determination perspective, we see the influence of the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, as well as a blurry continuum of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

More specifically we have learned that L2 acquisition and communication is rife with personal, familial, and social conflicts. The adolescent immersion students enjoy speaking to their teachers, although not if the teachers are perceived as too critical or focused on correcting every mistake. The young learners enjoy speaking with their peers, especially if they form a secret club to control communication, but they prefer not to speak French to peers in a situation that brings unwelcome attention to their status as immersion students. Adolescents do not like to be teased, although they do occasionally enjoy having fun at the expense of others. They report being willing to speak French outside of school, to their parents and grandparents, although they do not enjoy putting on a linguistic show for the amusement of others. Our students found satisfaction in the experience of being a mentor or being mentored, although error correction must be deftly handled to preserve harmony in the relationship. Finally, the adolescents in the study reported some use of L2 media, especially if their comprehension in situ allowed them to keep up with the story on television or at the movies. The students, however, do not especially enjoy the role of translator for their friends or family, except, maybe, sometimes.

Emerging from this discussion of willingness and unwillingness to communicate is a larger theoretical and research question. To what extent can we view WTC as a socially constructed, dialogic process? The participants in this study described how the actions of the other person, both verbal and nonverbal, are critically important to the dynamics of WTC. Much of the previous literature on WTC has presented the concept as an internal attribute, an individual difference variable affecting the communication process, and an outcome of language learning. Although we believe that an individual differences approach retains its value, perhaps it is time to widen the scope of the WTC concept to more explicitly take into account moment-to-moment dynamics within the social situation and the key role played by the communication partner(s). The individual differences approach and a dynamic dialogical approach would complement each other well, and WTC can and should be studied from both perspectives.

The theme of ambivalence emerged late in data analysis, after it became difficult to fit the themes into the pyramid shape. Although, in hindsight, a focus on ambivalence would have been enhanced by asking students to link their WTC and UnWTC diary entries, from time to time we saw fairly clear evidence of an ambivalent state of mind:

56. Quand je vois les touristes qui parle [sic] *français, je veux les parler* [sic]*, mais je suis trop timide de juste aller et parle. (ID 281, age 14, Grade 8)*

(When I see tourists who speak French, I want to speak them, but I am too shy to just go and speak.)

As the concept WTC develops to reflect the duality implicated by a state of ambivalence and better capture the influence of the interlocutor, we are beginning to see value in conceptualizing along two separate but interacting dimensions: WTC and UnWTC; that is, for some people at some times, it is possible to be both willing and unwilling to communicate. These dimensions correspond to the general approach and avoidance tendencies in the brain (Amodio, Master, Yee, & Taylor, 2008; Gray, 1994). Future research should explore the concept of ambivalence by asking participants more directly about moments when they are simultaneously willing and unwilling to communicate.

Before concluding the present article, we must note three other limitations of the study that might affect the interpretation of the results. First,

the qualitative methodology we used cannot assess the frequency of L2 encounters or the typicality of the experiences among immersion students. There is no systematic way to know how often each of these experiences occurred. Therefore, the study cannot shed light on the typical communication patterns of immersion students (but see Genesee, 1987; Wesche, 1993) and we cannot assess the generalizability of the findings to other social and pedagogical contexts. Second, when we asked students to describe WTC and UnWTC, "communication" was presented without a specific definition. To consider diary entries related to activities such as translation, watching TV, or speaking French to one's sister who does not speak French herself to be L2 communication events required a very broad definition of communication indeed. However, these are experiences spontaneously cited by the students when asked about communicating in French and are part of their experience with the L2 and their experience as adolescents. Third, we did not perform classroom observations or a member check to test our interpretation of the data among the original participants. Future studies might wish to incorporate one or both of these elements into the research methods.

In conclusion, subtle differences in the communication context, such as the ones described throughout this article, can significantly alter the affective tone of an experience, moving the speaker from a state of willingness to unwillingness to communicate. The 12- to 14-year-old French immersion students in this study were at a critical developmental stage. Immersion pedagogy places a strain on the development of self-related needs of the learners (especially autonomy, but also competence and relatedness). Therefore, special care should be given to understand the ambivalent psychological processes they are going through and the ways in which those processes impact L2 learning and communication.

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Toward a Multilingual Approach in the Study of Multilingualism in School Contexts
Guest Editors: Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter

This special issue focuses on various theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of multilingualism in school contexts that bring together recent trends in second language acquisition, multilingualism, and education. The volume discusses the definition and scope of multilingualism and multilingual competencies. In contrast to more traditional approaches that look at one language at a time, in this volume we offer a holistic approach that takes into account all the languages in the learner's repertoire. The volume also looks at multilingual practices in the classroom, including phenomena such as codeswitching, translanguaging, and codemeshing, and explores new ways to assess multilingual competencies in school contexts.

The contributors to this special issue are based in Europe, Israel, Australia, and the United States and share not only an interest in the study of multilingualism in school contexts but also a holistic approach to the study of language acquisition and language practices that highlights fluidity between the languages. The multidisciplinary holistic approach discussed in this volume opens new ways of looking at multilingualism both for researchers and teachers.