

Hierarchies of Authenticity in Study Abroad: French From Canada Versus French From France?

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Abstract

For many decades, Francophone regions in Canada have provided language study exchanges for French as a second language (FSL) learners within their own country. At the same time, FSL students and teachers in Canada continue to orient to a native speaker standard associated with European French. This Eurocentric orientation manifested itself in a recent study examining conceptions of authentic language among Canadian FSL teachers on professional study abroad in France. Taking an interactional perspective (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012), this article examines how the teachers negotiated discourses of language subordination (Lippi-Green, 1997) that construct Canadian French as less authentic than French from France. Findings show some teachers drawing on this hierarchization of French to “authenticate” (Coupland, 2010) an identity as French language expert, either by contrasting European and Canadian varieties of French or by projecting France as the locus of French language and culture as exclusively representative of authentic “Frenchness.”

Résumé

Depuis des décennies, les régions francophones au Canada ont offert aux apprenants de français langue seconde (FLS) des programmes d'échange linguistique dans leur propre pays. Toutefois, les étudiants et les enseignants de FLS au Canada ont tendance à toujours se référer à la norme standard du locuteur natif parlant le français européen. Cette orientation eurocentrique a été relevée récemment dans une enquête examinant la notion d'authenticité linguistique auprès d'un groupe d'enseignants de FLS à la suite d'un stage de formation en France. S'appuyant sur une perspective interactionnelle (De Fina et Georgakopoulou, 2012), cet article examine la façon dont les enseignants font face aux discours de subordination linguistique (Lippi-Green, 1997) qui contribuent à renforcer l'idée que le Canadien français est moins authentique que le français de France. L'analyse montre que certains enseignants utilisaient cette hiérarchie du français pour se justifier comme experts linguistiques en français dans leur processus d'authentification (Coupland, 2010) en contrastant les variétés canadiennes et européennes du français ou en privilégiant le français et la culture de la France comme seule variété authentique.

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Introduction

The culture of study abroad (SA) in second language (L2) education is predicated on notions of authenticity, specifically as these define language, speakers, and the cultural practices associated with the SA context. While language is traditionally thought of in the singular, there is growing acknowledgement of the pluricentric nature of the languages we use (e.g., Lüdi, 2011; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013). With this pluricentricity comes the hierarchization of language varieties in terms of their proximity to a so-called authentic norm, especially when there is more than one standard associated with that language. In the SA context, this hierarchization of authenticity can be especially salient since sojourners are focused on accessing “real” language and “real” culture by interacting with “real” speakers while abroad. This was indeed one of the main findings in a study investigating the documented experiences of French as a second language (FSL) teachers from Canada on professional development abroad in France (Wernicke-Heinrichs, 2013). The qualitative multiple case study, which investigated conceptions of authenticity in FSL teacher professional identity construction, showed evidence of participants orientating to a hierarchization of European versus Canadian French varieties in their narratives, in some cases even drawing on a Eurocentric perspective to authenticate (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) an identity as FSL teacher.

French in Canada has been discursively shaped through a trajectory of historical events in which its origins and its relationship with France have played a significant role. Interwoven with the notion of French as central to Francophone identity in Canada is a century-old preoccupation with the quality of particularly Québécois French vis-à-vis the French spoken in France. The ongoing “revalorization” (Levine, 2010) of *québécois*—the enhancement of the language in terms of its prestige—manifests itself in the efforts of Quebec’s *Office de la langue française* to promote extensive and correct usage of both spoken and written Québécois French. These efforts are a response to a past that saw French in Canada constructed as an outdated, “bastardized” language (Lappin, 1982), while pejorative attitudes toward Canadian French in 18th-century historical texts contributed to its perceptual deterioration (Bouchard, 2002; Noël, 1990). Francophones have continued to see the “patois” classification of their language as a fundamental threat to French Canadian identity and to their survival as a linguistic minority in North America. The *refrancisation* of French Canadian society at the beginning of the 20th century as well as the subsequent political mobilization of Francophone Quebec have focused on the revitalization of French in Canada and contributed to efforts to reassert its value as a legitimate language. This sense of struggle to legitimize Canadian French varieties has infused prevailing discourses of language subordination (Lippi-Green, 1997), linguistic purism (Bucholtz, 2003; Cameron, 1995), and Eurocentrism (Joseph, 1987; Train, 2000) in both France and Canada.

This article focuses on the narratives of two teacher-participants from the larger, above-mentioned study to consider how several instances of French language hierarchization involving the ranking of European over Québécois French were articulated both during and after the teachers’ sojourn to France. The discussion begins with a look at scholarly efforts that support the inclusion of Canadian French varieties in FSL education,

followed by an overview of the study and a brief discussion of the methodology and analytic approaches taken here. The first analysis highlights the salience of a discourse of subordination in this particular SA context, while the second analysis focuses on one teacher's identity displays that draw on the notion of hierarchized French as a resource in constructing a legitimate professional identity as FSL teacher. The discussion of findings is integrated across the analyses sections and summarized in the concluding section.

Canadian French Versus French From France in French as a Second Language Education

The status of Canadian French varieties versus European (or Hexagonal) French in FSL language education has been subject to a recurring debate over the past three decades, generally foregrounding a view that prioritizes European French as the only authentic variety (Levis, 2005; Train, 2000; see also Lowe & Pinner, 2016). For the most part, the discussions have centred on Québécois versus Parisian French, the latter typically associated with the French spoken in France and as representing the ideal model for *la francophonie* (Robyns, 1994). For example, Salien (1998) has observed that the question of “which” French to teach in American French language classrooms has been a recurring topic of discussion at professional conferences, with teachers admitting outright “to teaching their students to censure Quebec French” (p. 98). As a result, SA in Quebec has rarely been seen as an option for students interested in visiting, studying, or living in a French-speaking region.

Salien's (1998) emphasis on the merits of exposing French language students to different varieties of French has been taken up by other scholars in a number of ways. Although Auger and Valdman (1999) presented their support for “diverse voices” in the FSL classroom with a thorough discussion of Québécois French, their discussion concluded with a recommendation to privilege a “pedagogical norm,” which is seen as a more “neutral variant” and thus a more appropriate “target for acquisition” (p. 409). According to the authors, this pedagogical norm:

should reflect the formal usage of target native speakers—in the case of French, educated speakers from metropolitan France and, to the extent that it does not differ substantially from that norm, the speech of educated speakers from regions where French is the dominant native language: the French community of Belgium, French-speaking Switzerland, and Quebec. Although the speech of educated francophones from regions where French is a second language, for example, Haiti or sub-Saharan Africa, differs little from that of their Hexagonal peers, it is, nonetheless, colored by particularities reflecting local languages. (p. 409)

Auger and Valdman justified the need for a classroom norm by pointing to the negative attitudes often expressed in ongoing debates about standardized Québécois French and to the need to counter any potential adverse reactions that a regional variant may elicit when used by an unknowing learner. Train (2000, 2007) has addressed at length the detrimental implications of a “pedagogical hyperstandard” in French language education generally, specifically as these relate to notions of “real” versus “inauthentic” language that is grounded in a nativist orientation. The above-cited definition from Auger and Valdman alone, makes explicit a hierarchy of linguistic authenticity in which French language

varieties are ranked based on both geopolitical and racial/ethnic proximity to the French spoken by native speakers in France. The question of which variety should be taught in the French language classroom clearly intersects with issues of racism and the continuing sociolinguistic and cultural dominance of Western colonialism, including France.

Dickinson (1999) offered a more productive, Canadian perspective in response to Salien (1998), with useful suggestions for how to incorporate literary and audiovisual resources from Quebec in a FSL curriculum. More importantly, Dickinson provided the reader with some clarification on the commonly encountered mislabelling and conflation of Canadian French varieties with *joual* or *québécois*, which has contributed to ongoing misconceptions of Québécois or Acadian French as a mere patois (Bouchard, 2002).

The issue of what counts as legitimate French in FSL education has been considered also in conjunction with language assessment. Marisi (1994) examined the acceptability of French Canadian regionalisms in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) oral proficiency interviews (OPIs), focusing specifically on rater inconsistencies between Canadian and non-Canadian testers as these relate to the sociolinguistic criteria of the ACTFL scale. Not surprisingly, findings show that a scale based on standard usage does not easily accommodate regional contextual factors evident in the speech of even native speakers of French who are using a more informal register. The author concluded with a call for revised testing criteria that is more sensitive to Canadian French varieties and promoted a view of Québécois or Acadian French “as a language rich in its own right” (Marisi, 1994, p. 520).

The monolectal orientation in L2 education has further been examined in research on foreign language textbooks. Wiczorek’s (1994) review of 12 FSL textbooks commonly used in North America found that a mere 5% of the content pertained to regions other than France, clear evidence of “a mother country or single dialect bias” (p. 488). A similar study (Chapelle, 2009), conducted a decade and a half later, examined nine U.S. French textbooks to find only a moderate increase of instances mentioning Canada—15.3% for textbook sections and 6.5% for the accompanying workbooks. However, Chapelle was quick to qualify even these findings by pointing to the wide variation of content across the textbooks, as well as their selective emphasis on historical, cultural, and linguistic particularities of Quebec. According to the author, the textbooks’ different approaches raise important questions about when to introduce students to Canadian content, how much content, and the different ways such content might be relevant for American students. Broaching linguistic and cultural diversity in the FSL classroom requires critical consideration of the political elements of language use, as well as issues of linguistic identity and ownership—all of which intersect with prevailing assumptions that characterize some varieties of French as more or less authentic than others.

Despite discussions of French as a pluricentric language (e.g., Lüdi, 1992; Pöll, 2005; Zampieri, Gebre, & Diwersy, 2012), the most recent research has continued to provide evidence of a monocentric view of French, with varieties in France “still considered the standard norm to be aspired to” (Kircher, 2012, p. 362). Although Kircher’s (2012) study showed evidence of increased feelings of appreciation and belonging in association with Québécois French among university-aged youth in Montreal and Quebec City, European French continued to maintain a higher status in terms of economic opportunity and social mobility for this group. Similarly, Walsh (2013) found purist orientations among both European as well as Quebec speakers of French, although with different emphases. While speakers in France tended toward an “elitist purism” by being

less accepting of non-standard structural usages, Quebecers showed a greater concern for “external purism,” that is, use of anglicisms, demonstrated in this case with a preference for integrated loan words over unassimilated lexical loans into French (Gómez Capuz, 1997). Most interesting about this study is that these purist attitudes were more explicitly articulated among French speakers in Canada—possibly as a way of compensating for the linguistic insecurities associated with Canadian varieties of French.

The particular environment of SA appears to provide an especially productive setting for discourses of linguistic purism. Overtly associated with notions of authentic language and culture, the target language community is sought out specifically for its immersive access to the so-called native language, still seen by many as the most ideal option for successful language development (Coleman, 2007; Mitchell, Tracy-Ventura, & McManus, 2015). As noted earlier, in Canada, evidence of this hierarchization gets articulated in expressions of linguistic insecurity that raise concerns about the vitality and quality of French. At the same time, ideologies of monolingualism and purism contribute to a conception of Canadian French as having to be protected from extinction while remaining untainted (locally authentic, Heller, 1994). Heller (1999) discussed “the ambivalent relationship between French in Canada and French in France” as follows:

[French speakers in France] may act as models, but are often also resented as imperialists almost as oppressive as the English in their contempt for French Canadians. They are also both the source of French Canadian identity, a glorious heritage, and traitors (since the Revolution) to the original cause which brought the French to Canada in the first place. This creates a tension between an acceptance of France as the origin of the value of the French language, and a desire to value what is distinctive about the Canadian variety of the language. The source of the value of French in Canada is both its origins and its distinctiveness. (p. 151)

The ensuing tension plays itself out in equally contradictory ways. On the one hand, there is the publication of a standard *dictionnaire québécois* (Guillot, 1999) as well as spelling reforms and changes to word forms (e.g., the feminization of profession titles, Dawes, 2003) that do not align with conventions in France. On the other hand, the legitimacy of French in Canada has continued to be reasserted based on its historical association with France (Bourhis, 1997; Lockerbie, 2003).

With these enduring concerns about the quality of Canadian or Québécois French vis-à-vis the French spoken in France, French language learners in North America have remained reluctant to consider Quebec as a viable option for language study sojourns, despite its geographic proximity and financial and logistical feasibility when compared with SA in France (Chapelle, 2009). Despite a growing body of SA research challenging long-held assumptions about L2 development in an authentic language setting (Kinginger, 2009; Rees & Klapper, 2011; Wilkinson, 1998), the touted benefits of being immersed in the target language community continues to be a strongly held belief in L2 education (e.g., Allen, 2010). Consequently, a central aim of SA experiences is that sojourners acquire access to “real” speakers and cultural encounters—an expectation also frequently expressed in the promotional literature advertising study sojourns abroad in which France is typically idealized as the only place for “discovering the French way of life in an authentic, picturesque region” (*Centre d’Approches Vivantes des Langues et des Médias*

[CAVILAM], 2013). The remainder of this paper examines the way this notion of linguistic and cultural authenticity plays out in an SA context.

Methodology

The discourses and discursive strategies discussed below were generated for a larger qualitative multiple case study that examined the SA experiences of K-12 in-service FSL teachers from Western Canada who travelled to France on a provincial government initiated and funded professional development (PD) initiative. The research focus was on the discursive constructions of participants' experiences with authentic language and culture (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), and the relevance of these in constructing an identity as FSL teacher. The first phase of the study focused on the entire cohort of 87 teachers' during the 2-week sojourn at the CAVILAM in Vichy, with data produced through questionnaires, travel journals, site observations, and field notes. Participants were recruited to the study upon arrival in France so as not to make their potential acceptance in the professional development project contingent on participation in a research study. The second phase constituted a 10-month follow-up study in British Columbia, beginning a month after the teachers' return from Vichy conducted with seven participants from the original cohort. Data sources during this second phase included semistructured interviews, teaching journals, classroom observations, and email correspondence between participants and the researcher.

The Sojourn

The main aim of the PD program at CAVILAM was to introduce the Canadian teachers to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) and the *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELF). In addition, the program offered language classes and teaching workshops, as well as a wide range of extracurricular cultural activities. Although the program had been specifically designed for the cohort from Canada, the teachers were one of several groups attending CAVILAM programs at the time. The majority of the teachers ($n = 55$) took part in an intensive DELF training session over the 2-week duration in order to become certified examiners or trainers themselves. The remainder ($n = 32$) opted for teaching workshops and/or language classes in addition to an introduction to the CEFR and DELF (see Figure 1).

		Language Program (Perfectionnement linguistique) 7 participants	Pedagogy & DELF (Parcours thématiques) 25 participants	DELFL Certification (Formation DELF) 55 participants
WEEK 1	Mornings	Language classes according to CEFR levels A2, B1, B2, C1	Pedagogy Workshop (choice of weekly theme)	DELFL Training
	12:30	Lunch		
	14:00 to 15:30	Conversation classes: CEFR levels A2, B1, B2, C1	Pedagogy Workshop (choice of weekly theme)	DELFL Training
	16:00 to 17:30	DELFL orientation	Séances 'Découverte': open lectures & workshops	
WEEKEND				
WEEK 2	Mornings	Language classes according to CEFR levels A2, B1, B2, C1	DELFL training	DELFL training
	12:30	Lunch		
	14:00 to 15:30	Conversation classes: CEFR levels A2, B1, B2, C1	DELFL training	DELFL training
	16:00 to 17:30	DELFL orientation	Séances 'Découverte': open lectures & workshops	

Figure 1. An abbreviated version of the PD program at CAVILAM.

This group of teachers had the opportunity to interact with non-Canadian (native and L2) speakers of French on a daily basis in their language classes or pedagogy workshops. Enrolment in the three options was in part based on participants' language expertise, with the DELFL training sessions requiring native-speaker or native-like competency in French, as stipulated in the sojourn application process. Those teachers not participating in the DELFL certification sessions were required to take a French language test on the first day of the program, for placement in either the teaching workshop stream or language courses.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis presented here focuses on one teacher's journal accounts to demonstrate the subordination of Canadian French in relation to European French as a recurring concern for the teachers during the sojourn abroad. The discourse-oriented thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted in keeping with the discursive constructionist framework (Potter & Hepburn, 2008) of the larger study, meaning that the analytic focus was on participants' talk about their experiences in relation to broader cultural meanings or discourses about French language varieties. Data were understood as a representation jointly constructed between researcher and participants, rather than as a reflection of teachers' thoughts and beliefs (Roulston, 2001; Talmy, 2011). The data extracts for this analysis were chosen from the data set of journal entries due to their relevance to both the study's central interest in authentic language and in response to the question under discussion here, namely the ways different varieties of French are valorized in terms of authenticity. The handwritten journal entries were transcribed and coded for discursive themes, which were identified according to their position in the journal text. The codes were examined in relation to other relevant or similar themes across the entire data set to make apparent discourses operating across participants' research accounts.

The second analysis presented below considers journal narratives and interview interactions of one of the study's seven focal participants. For this participant, French from France provided a productive means of claiming an identity as an authentic speaker (and thus teacher) of French. Within the larger constructionist framework of the study, identity, analyzed from an interactional perspective in relation to authenticity, was theorized as a process of authentication (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Coupland, 2010). In other words, "being authentic" as a teacher of French was something that could be accomplished by taking essentialist understandings of authenticity (i.e., authenticity as an inherent feature of things, places, people, etc.) and using these to make a claim for an authentic or "real" self, in order to demonstrate one's authority as legitimate user and teacher of French. In drawing on an interactional approach to narrative, the analysis considered "how people use stories in their interactive engagements to convey a sense of who they are" (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 164). Participants' accounts were viewed as discursive action for the purpose of constructing a particular identity. The emphasis was therefore not on who people are prior to analysis, but "on what and who they *do being* [original emphasis] in specific environments of language use for specific purposes" (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 167).

Results

Discourses of Language Subordination on Study Abroad: A Thematic Analysis

The following thematic analysis of four journal extracts provides insight into how the notion of authenticity was articulated in discourses of language subordination and linguistic purism during the sojourn. The extracts represent journal entries that were written by a teacher named Maxine (pseudonym). At the time of the sojourn, Maxine had 20 years of teaching experience and was teaching core French at the secondary level. At CAVILAM, she was enrolled in the teaching workshops and thus found herself interacting with non-Canadian L2 French speakers (not necessarily teachers). The hand-written entries have been recontextualized (Briggs, 2003) into a text document with consideration of the author's graphic representation. The analysis begins with an excerpt from Maxine's first journal entry:

Extract 1 (Maxine: Vichy journal/Day 1)

1 ...The day before I was told that "vous parlez le français ancien. Ici,
 2 notre français a développé à cause de notre interaction avec les autres
 3 cultures. Notre français continue à évoluer. Comment est-ce qu'il est
 4 possible que les Canadiens apprennent le français quand ils sont si loin
 5 de la France?" I felt like the country bumpkin amidst the three
 6 Europeans.

In this first journal entry, Maxine relates one of her first experiences upon arriving in Vichy, namely being told by "three Europeans" (lines 5-6) that she speaks Old French, a French that has not "developed" nor "continued to evolve" through interaction with other cultures, as French in France (lines 2-3). The exchange concludes with Maxine being asked "how it is possible that Canadians learn French when they are so far away from France" (lines 3-5), leaving her feeling like a "country bumpkin." This last reference calls to mind

the earlier mentioned characterization of Québécois French as a patois, the language of the illiterate, poor, and simple-minded *paysan canadien-français* (Bouchard, 2002).

The next day Maxine reportedly experienced a similar situation, this time in connection with a Canadian teaching resource:

Extract 2 (Maxine: Vichy journal/Day 2)

1 ...I was so excited when a Canadian mentionned "Étienne" and his CD's as
2 teaching tools, but then another teacher said, "Le problème avec Étienne,
3 c'est qu'il parle avec un accent Québécois," so the resource was not
4 taken seriously/easily dismissed by several other teachers...

As Maxine relates here, when the language CDs of a well-known Canadian artist were mentioned in class, other teachers criticized and dismissed these as inappropriate teaching resources because the artist speaks with a Québécois accent (lines 2-3). Maxine's acknowledgment of her initial excitement, subsequently squashed by others' portrayal of these resources as unacceptable, points to this encounter as being a significant affront to her. Characterizing Québécois French as inappropriate, even "problematic" in this case, not only invalidates this language variety but, by extension, also the authority of the teacher who uses such instructional resources.

On the third day of the sojourn, Maxine describes another encounter in her journal, again involving Canadian teaching resources:

Extract 3 (Maxine: Vichy journal/Day 3)

1 My one complaint today appears to be one of a recurring theme → Canadian
2 French! One of the handouts pointed out in bold letters that this
3 resource is "very French Canadian," and should not be used seriously,
4 [that]...a lot of the info can't be used because it's incorrect. In the
5 one situation, I was told that our French was "ancien" because it hasn't
6 evolved through interaction with other cultures (...). Yet on the other
7 hand, it appears that the French from France (...) does not want to be
8 sullied by the Québécois/French Canadian influence. I am getting mixed
9 signals. It is okay for every other francophone culture to have an
10 influence on the evolution of the French language, but not ours?

This particular incident prompts Maxine to identify others' issue with Canadian French as "a recurring theme" in her daily reflections. The narrative describes how a handout, explicitly marked as "very French Canadian" (line 3), was characterized in class as being "incorrect" (line 5) and therefore as an unreliable teaching resource. Of particular interest here is Maxine's attempt to make sense of the "mixed signals" (line 9) that she has been getting over the past three days in these encounters. As she explains, on the one hand, French in Europe is hailed for having "evolved through interactions with other cultures" (lines 6-7), yet, on the other hand, French Canada is not considered part of those cultural influences, nor is any interaction between Canadian French and European French desired. Here Maxine's use of the term "sullied" (line 8) makes relevant a discourse of linguistic purism in connection with long-held views about the quality of Canadian or Québécois French vis-à-vis its more prestigious European heritage. Her encounters highlight the

conflicted, ambiguous, and often illogical nature of language ideologies (Errington, 2001; Woolard, 1998).

By the fourth day, Maxine is demonstrably upset about the ongoing critique toward her and her colleagues as speakers of French from Canada, demonstrated in this final extract about an afternoon class where students were working with the subjunctive tense to create dialogues for role play:

Extract 4 (Maxine: Vichy journal/Day 4)

1 ...I made the comment "in Canada, we would use the expression" and I
 2 started to write out the answer for the group. Then [a student]
 3 replied, "We say it this way here" and shut me down completely. Then he
 4 and another student took over writing out the answer...I can't believe
 5 how rude some of these people are at times! and I am not the only
 6 Canadian who has been noticing the same putdowns/dismissals! At lunch,
 7 a group of us were discussing this very topic because one of the
 8 teachers was furious over a similar incident that had happened in her
 9 morning session. We are all shocked at how we are being treated like
 10 second-class citizens, whose country and language have no value/are not
 11 acknowledged, etc. The staff at CAVILAM are wonderful and treat us
 12 well, but it is the other students and a few careless remarks by
 13 instructors that are reprehensible, uncalled for and downright rude
 14 actions.

In this entry, Maxine speaks not only for herself but also for her colleagues when she expresses shock at "being treated like second-class citizens" (lines 9-10). Here we see a culmination of her frustration with the repeatedly expressed view that Canada or Canadian French "have no value" or "are not acknowledged" (line 10-11) by others. When her attempt to share a Canadian use of French in class is explicitly "shut . . . down" (line 3), we see her shift from mere observer of these incidents to someone who is directly and personally involved—someone explicitly identified by the others as not entitled to speak (or write). It is therefore not surprising to see her mobilize group affiliation based on national boundaries with references to Canada, country, and citizens. The issue here is no longer limited to a teaching resource or a particular Canadian artist. Rather, it is a concern shared by her colleagues, who have witnessed "similar incidents" and are equally "furious" (line 8) about these "reprehensible, uncalled for and downright rude actions" (lines 13-14).

Maxine's expression of indignation and her subsequent rallying of her Canadian colleagues to this cause may to some extent indicate her unfamiliarity with such negative attitudes toward Canadian French. It might also be taken to show some resistance on her part to being positioned as inferior within discourses of a hierarchization of French. At the end of this last journal entry, Maxine describes seeing a video presentation that same afternoon, which highlighted North American varieties of French. Her description of the presentation focuses in particular on "the feisty Acadian woman" who argued that Acadia be recognized as "just as important as the other francophone areas," given that it remains much closer to the original French language of the past, leading Maxine to conclude that "France needs to know its roots" and "can't just dismiss them" (Maxine: Vichy journal/Day 4). Altogether, these journal extracts make evident a hierarchization of French that draws on the widespread and commonly heard discourses discussed earlier with consideration of the research literature. Maxine's reference to getting mixed messages, for example, speaks

directly to “the ambivalent relationship between French in Canada and French in France” (Heller, 1999, p. 151).

While much of the research sheds light on the problematic nature of a discourse of language subordination as it relates to Canadian French varieties in FSL education, the present study also found participants using the so-called authenticity of European French as a discursive means to construct a (more) legitimate identity as teacher of French. As noted earlier, authenticity of French in Canada rests on the paradoxical orientation to both an idealized standard of European French and insistence on a legitimate, local Canadian standard. For at least one teacher-participant in Vichy, this tension provided a strategy with which to construct a particular identity as FSL teacher, as demonstrated in the next section.

A Eurocentric Construction of French Language Expertise: A Discourse Analysis

The analysis in this section centres on two journal entries and an interview interaction of one of the focal participants in the study. At the time of the sojourn, Helen had been teaching at the secondary level for one year in both core French and French immersion, while her senior colleague, a Francophone from Quebec, taught the senior French immersion classes. Helen had learned French during her school years in the United States, had spent a year in France two decades earlier, and generally attributed her competence in the language to her time in France.

On the first day of the program at CAVILAM, a significant source of anxiety for many of the British Columbia teachers was the unexpected and mandated placement test, with test results determining to which program or language level the teachers ultimately had access. Evidence of this is demonstrated in the data analysis below. When Helen had applied for the sojourn to Vichy, she had expected to be enrolled in the DELF training sessions, yet based on the results of her placement test had been advised to take language classes at CAVILAM. She ultimately managed to negotiate access into the pedagogy workshops instead. As current research has showed (e.g., Bayliss & Vignola, 2007; Johnson, 2001; Plews, Breckenridge, & Cambre, 2010), an emphasis on language expertise can be a crucial source of tension for those teachers who are negotiating dual identities as both teachers and ongoing learners of their L2. This was also a major finding of the larger study, namely that an identity as language learner tends to conflict with normative assumptions about what it means to be a language teacher, especially in an SA context that has participants specifically identifying as language educators (Wernicke, forthcoming). The tension around these dual identities as both language teacher and language learner requires that teachers negotiate expectations of native-like language typically associated with an L2 teacher identity. This tension forms the basis of the analysis of Helen’s identity displays analyzed below.

The following three extracts demonstrate Helen’s repeated use of a discursive strategy that engages a hierarchization of French in which the European standard is consistently contrasted with the French spoken by her colleagues in Canada. In doing so, Helen draws on a discourse in which France and its speakers are constructed as the purest and only authentic source of French (Joseph, 1987). The first two extracts are journal entries produced in France during the sojourn; the third extract is a strip of interview interaction recorded 8 months later during a class visit in Canada. While the production of each narrative constitutes a locally situated event, these individual instances of identity display are not only understood in terms of the immediate local context in which they occur

but are seen as connected to other previous or future performances (Blommaert, 2015; Butler, 1999). A participant's identity positions are therefore seen to be grounded in social practices that are the product of prevailing discourses, which in turn provide this sense of constancy (Widdicombe, 1998). In Helen's case, the narratives she produced served to account for her competence in French, as a way of legitimizing her identity as an FSL teacher.

The analysis begins with Helen's first journal entry, written on the third day of the sojourn. The first part of the entry (not included here) details her experience with the placement test, followed by an explanation (presented below) for the "rough beginning" of the sojourn:

Extract 5 (Helen: Vichy journal/Day 3, 1st entry)

1 ...The biggest problem with our rough beginning was it undermined my
 2 confidence in my ability to speak French, and made me 2nd guess my
 3 decision to be here. I also find it difficult to speak French w/ other
 4 Canadians, when in fact, I really just want to speak French with the
 5 French. HOWEVER I have realized that there is a huge amount of learning
 6 going on for me - and part of that is sharing my teaching experiences
 7 with other teachers, and not just in French. I tend to want to immerse
 8 myself here - and because of the nature of this group - it won't be
 9 completely possible. I have also realized that I am regrouping my
 10 knowledge and am poised to take several big steps forward. It's been 25
 11 years since I was last in France 25 years since I have "lived in French"
 12 - and I have reached the end of my "knowledge" for now. I am in the
 13 process of accumulating more...

Extract 5 works to reconcile two identities: (a) Helen's self-attributed identity as French teacher and as assumed expert in the language (an identity on which her participation in the sojourn is based), and (b) Helen's ascribed identity as a result of the placement test, namely as deficient speaker and learner of French. Being advised to enrol in language classes meant that she was denied access to the DELF certification sessions, and thereby also denied membership in the teacher group identified as "native speakers," an identity normatively associated with a teacher identity, as discussed above. As Helen points out, this "rough beginning" (line 1) prompted her to second-guess her decision to take part in the sojourn, the key issue being that it "undermined [her] confidence in [her] ability to speak French" (line 2). In the account, the difficulties Helen experiences with French are juxtaposed with her disinclination to interact with the other Canadian teachers (line 7), and to some extent attributed to "the nature of the group" (line 8). This becomes clearer as she distances herself from her colleagues throughout the narrative by articulating a desire to only "speak French with the French" (lines 4-5), to "immerse [her]self" in France (lines 7-8), and to share her teaching experiences with "other" teachers (as opposed to being merely a language learner). Citing the other Canadian teachers as an obstacle both serves as justification for her current difficulties and, at the same time, functions as a preemptive move in the event that she does not improve her French during her stay in France. The implication here is that her association with Canadian speakers of French has the potential to compromise or taint her immersion in France. For Helen, "liv[ing] in French" (line 11), means being in France and speaking French with the French, as she did 25 years before, and as she is supposed to do again now in Vichy. Her observation, "I have reached the end

of my knowledge for now” (line 12), attributes her limits in French to not having been in France for 25 years, with that experience seemingly having sustained her until now. In so doing, she completely discounts her daily contact with the French spoken in Canada back home, thereby implicitly rendering it inconsequential. Not only does the narrative index disaffiliation from the Canadian cohort, but the references to a desired, former affiliation with France and the French spoken there work to (re)authenticate her competence in French and thus her legitimacy as an FSL teacher in the face of a disappointing language assessment.

The same distancing from and devaluing of Québécois French is evident in Extract 6 below. This account, written at the beginning of the second week, revolves around another salient topic—French accent and pronunciation—in this case displaying Helen’s awareness about the normative assumptions associated with European French. Her preoccupation with pronunciation offers a good example of how accent may be used as a marker of authenticity to construct a particular identity (Leppänen & Piirainen-Marsh, 2009; Müller, 2013; Rampton, 2006).

Extract 6 Helen (Vichy journal/4th entry, day 7)

1 Today I started thinking about the music of language. It seems to me that
 2 is one of the last things to go. That’s to say, in order to become truly
 3 fluent in a language one must speak the language with its music, not just
 4 the vocab, grammar, etc. I started thinking about this because I live
 5 (here in Vichy) with other students (Rumanian, Vietnamese, + German) and
 6 I notice that we all speak French with the music of our maternal
 7 language...I particularly notice it with Canadians who speak French with
 8 a flatter more N American accent, than the French.

This extract begins with a reflection about “the music of language” (line 1). The reflective quality of the narrative is achieved with phrases invoking mental states, such as “I started thinking about” (lines 1 & 4) and “it seems to me that” (lines 1-2). Both terms “think” and “seem” portray a sense of something not necessarily being but rather appearing to be so, thereby minimizing the factual weight of the journal entry (Edwards & Potter, 2005). At the same time, these mental-state terms signal that some form of accountability is required on the part of the author, which is in fact the case, as becomes clear at the end of the entry. The congenial tone is further achieved through the use of first-person plural deictics (Wortham, 1996) in lines 6-7: “we all speak French with the music of *our* [my emphasis] maternal language”—thereby including her in the story as a fellow L2 learner who shares “with other students” (line 5) the challenges of becoming “truly fluent” (line 3) in French. Her use of the plural deictic also serves to establish Helen’s interactional relationship with the groups described in the narrative, in this case creating affiliation with the other CAVILAM students (of both European and non-European nationality) while indexing disaffiliation from her Canadian colleagues. This move is important because it allows Helen once again to draw on a discourse of language subordination as an authenticating device, which she puts into play with her observation that “Canadians speak French with a flatter more N American accent, than the French” (lines 7-8). This characterization sets up a contrast with her earlier reflection, that “in order to become truly fluent in a language one must speak the language with its music” (lines 2-3). To be “truly fluent” in French indexes a linguistic identity as authentic speaker of French, but only as it pertains to European French, based on

the contrasting characterization of North American French as less than “true” French—indexed here with the term “flat.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* defined *flat* in pejorative terms as meaning “unclear” or “dull,” whereas in reference to music it describes this term as deviating from the “true pitch” (“flat”, 2015). In other words, if a native-like European pronunciation of French is the final step in attaining a status as a true, authentic French speaker, then North American French amounts to an inauthentic variety based on the way its pronunciation has been characterized here. This inauthenticity of North American French is further underscored with Helen’s reference to maternal language (line 7). For the speakers mentioned in the extract, learning another language means supplementing or replacing the music of one’s maternal language with the native-sounding music of the acquired language. The only exception is the North American accent that is only ever flat, in other words, devoid of any music, and therefore not a real language.

Accent also figures prominently in this next extract, but this time as a de-authenticating device as it relates to Helen’s colleague. The extract comes from the first interview with Helen, conducted by telephone 5 months after the sojourn, and begins with a question about the other French teacher at her school (M = the author, H = Helen):

Extract 7 Helen (interview/18:03-19:24)

- 1 M: um so I’d like to know a little bit more about the other French
 2 teacher that you work with
 3 H: her name is ((name of colleague))-
 4 M: [mhm]
 5 H: [and] she’s uh wonderful she’s Quebecois- born and raised in Quebec.
 6 so she’s a francophone. she’s been in um Western Canada for twenty-
 7 eight years now
 8 M: okay
 9 H: I’d say she probably ((adjudicator tone)) speaks at an A2 heh heh
 10 M: uh- heh- rea(h)- w-w(h)a- (.)okay-okay this is so interesting okay g-
 11 go on heh
 12 H: ((mentions DELF)) ...um so yeah- well what I notice about her is that
 13 um- she speaks really really quite well but every once in a while um
 14 you can tell that she’s not a native speaker
 15 (0.8)
 16 M: she's not a native ↓speaker
 17 (0.2)
 18 H: yeah sh- so y- she's not a native ↑English speaker
 19 M: English- you mean she speaks ↑English at ↑A2
 20 H: yeah she speaks ↑English at A2
 21 M: oh okay okay and her French- but her French is-
 22 H: oh her French is p- her French is perfect but- but she- um she speaks
 23 uh French with far less of a Quebecois accent than many of the people
 24 that we were in France with
 25 (0.3)
 26 M: okay?
 27 H: she has worked I think to lose it and to speak a cleaner kind of
 28 accentless French
 29 M: o:::kay [okay]
 30 H: [she’s] wonderful.

In her response to my question, Helen first provides the teacher’s name, praises her—“she’s uh wonderful” (line 5)—and provides a succinct linguistic profile of her

colleague. Then, using a mock voice and followed by laughter, she adds, “I’d say she probably speaks at an A2” (line 9)—A2 being the second beginner level (“way stage/elementary”) on the global scale of the CEFR. This last turn has clearly confused me, but I reciprocate her laughter, sensing that there is a joke that I do not yet understand. Helen explains that, despite her colleague’s speaking ability “you can tell that she’s not a native speaker” (line 14). My confusion continues as to how Helen’s colleague can be labeled a non-native speaker when she has just been identified as a Francophone, until Helen clarifies that her colleague “is not a native ↑English speaker” (line 18). This key information, *English*, is not only emphasized prosodically, but repeated twice in my subsequent recast of her explanation “English-you mean she speaks ↑English at ↑A2” (line 19). In only six turns, Helen has (re-)positioned her colleague from praiseworthy Francophone teacher to deficient English speaker three times.

Positioning a fellow teacher as an A2-level language learner constitutes but the first instance of de-authenticating her colleague’s authority as teacher. The second instance of de-authentication follows in the remainder of the extract, this time with explicit reference to her colleague’s French. Given Helen’s ratification (line 20) of my recast, I immediately return to the issue of French in the next turn, showing that my interest was in fact in her colleague’s identity as a Francophone teacher. At this point Helen aligns with my intended line of questioning by maintaining that her colleague’s French is perfect, explaining (with specific reference to her study abroad experience) that this is because her colleague “speaks French with less of a Québécois accent than many of the people [Helen was] in France with” (lines 22-24). This rather backhanded praise is taken up another notch in her next turn with “she has worked to lose it I think to speak a cleaner kind of accentless French.” Ultimately, Helen’s compliment comes at the expense of other Canadians and amounts to a less than flattering qualification of her colleague’s “perfect French.” We see the notion of linguistic perfection (i.e., authenticity) and linguistic purity (“a cleaner . . . French”) once again hierarchized in terms of language variety—the implication being that a Québécois accent is not perfect French. Setting up a contrast that indexes European French as more authentic, and by extension her own pronunciation of French, offers a means of authenticating her own position as an FSL teacher in relation to a senior, Francophone colleague. Whether the colleague has indeed striven to acquire an accent that Helen presumes to have or at least also aspires to is of no consequence here. Ultimately, this narrative works to construct a more equal positioning for Helen with the other teacher, achieved through the de-authentication of Helen’s colleague on two accounts: first as an L2 speaker of English and, second, as a native speaker of a less authentic French (i.e., Québécois).

In sum, in each of the three extracts presented above, Helen has taken up the study abroad experience as a means of constructing a self as speaker of authentic (i.e., European) French that allows her to claim a position in proximity to a native speaker standard, which in turn confers authority as expert teacher of that language (Clark & Paran, 2007; Widdowson, 1994).

Concluding Thoughts

This article considered the salience of discourses articulating Eurocentric and monocentric conceptions of French in an SA context by examining sojourn participants’ orientation to ideologies of language subordination and linguistic purism. The first analysis

demonstrated the thematic prominence of these discourses in one teacher's journal entries, particularly in narratives that focused on Canadian teachers' interactions with non-Canadians studying in France. The second analysis highlighted discursive processes of authentication and de-authentication in the narratives of another teacher-participant. Notions of linguistic authenticity associated with European French were drawn on to create disaffiliation from Canadian French, which was seen as less authentic and inappropriate for the FSL classroom. This distancing strategy ultimately served to construct an identity as authentic (i.e., expert) user of French, which is normatively associated with an identity as legitimate (i.e., competent) French teacher. In other words, a subordinating discourse that specifically engages notions of prestige associated with the French spoken in France (Martel & Cajole-Laganière, 1995) is used as a way of authenticating language expertise and thereby substantiating the legitimacy of a position as FSL teacher. The focus on authentic language within the context of SA points to a main finding of the larger study discussed here, namely the persistent and wide-ranging preoccupation among teachers and SA learners with native speaker norms and monocentric views of language, which are taken to be the only acceptable standard for the L2 classroom (Train, 2007; see also Lowe & Pinner, 2016). One way of addressing such constraints may be to explicitly consider these hierarchizing discourses in teacher education within the context of L2 learning on professional development initiatives on SA. This may involve providing teacher-participants with alternative conceptions of language learning and teaching, grounded in a social practice perspective that views language use in terms of linguistic repertoires (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010) rather than as a bounded system of standardized structures. In order to embrace a social practice perspective of language, teachers must become aware of underlying concepts with regard to how language expresses meaning, the situatedness of social and cultural practices, as well as an understanding of the dynamic and variable nature of language (Johnson, 2009).

The analyses presented here further contribute to current SA research by challenging traditional assumptions about SA, including expectations about the affordances of so-called immersion environments and the interactions SA participants encounter with locals and internationals. In this sense, the study aligns with the emerging critical orientation that is shifting from a view of SA as simply another variable in language learning to a focus on the complexity of the SA setting itself (e.g., Jackson, 2008), interpreted as a "complex, dialogic interaction of the natural and social backdrop and the subjectivities of the players" (Kingtoner, 2011, p. 626). This has implications for the conception of and preparation for SA initiatives, especially when these form part of L2 teacher education or professional development programs. For FSL teachers in North America, it means engaging with alternative understandings of language, ones that consider "French as plural" (Fagyal, Kibbee, & Jenkins, 2006) and contribute to a more inclusive view of effective SA experiences. This may mean that, instead of an authentically immersive experience, SA is taken to be simply another opportunity for language use, another means of experiencing one's ability to negotiate and function in another language, no matter which language variety one might encounter. In view of this, this article argues for a move away from the constraining adherence to language standards and the inequalities inherent in notions of linguistic authenticity that continue to inform FSL education in North America, and elsewhere. Such a move will provide for a more dynamic and diverse teaching and learning environment and offer students, as future sojourners and possibly teachers, increased opportunity to benefit from the encounters they have with other

speakers of French, regardless of geographic location or sociopolitical and cultural affiliation.

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Notes

¹ My use of the terms “French from Canada” or “Canadian French” does not refer to a single language variety but takes into account the many different varieties of contemporary French used in Canada (e.g., Québécois, Acadian, Franco-Manitoban, Michif).

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