

ON WORKING WITH RACIALIZED YOUTH IN FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: ONE TEACHER'S CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

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Abstract: In Canada, institutional and systemic barriers in French as a second language (FSL) programs have created conditions for ongoing exclusion of marginalized groups, such as English Language Learners (ELLs), many of whom are students of colour. The present paper seeks to examine the complex interplay of status, language ideologies and hierarchies of power that permeate FSL programs established in settler colonial Canada. I use culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as a framework to narratively examine the antiracist and anti-oppressive practices of one FSL teacher who took part in a 4-year professional learning community to develop their stance of teacher as inquirer. The findings show how CRT as a framework can concretely reveal macro- and micro-level points of tension to address systemic barriers and challenge institutional racism and discrimination in FSL. Applying this conceptual lens can help transform and broaden the way students' experiences in the FSL program are understood and can inform the pedagogical practices of Canadian educators and researchers working with vulnerable, racialized and/or culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Key words: French as a Second Language, intersectionality, culturally-responsive teaching, culturally and linguistically diverse youth, antiracism

Résumé : Au Canada, les barrières institutionnelles et systémiques dans les programmes de français langue seconde (FLS) ont créé les conditions d'une exclusion continue des groupes marginalisés, tels que les apprenants de langue anglaise (ELL), dont beaucoup sont des étudiants de couleur. Le présent article vise à examiner l'interaction complexe entre le statut, les idéologies linguistiques et les hiérarchies de pouvoir qui imprègnent les programmes de FLS établis dans l'état colonial du Canada. J'utilise l'enseignement sensible à la culture (ESC) comme cadre conceptuel pour examiner de manière narrative les pratiques antiracistes et anti-oppressives d'une enseignante de FLS qui a participé à une communauté d'apprentissage professionnel de quatre ans pour développer sa position en tant qu'enseignante-chercheure. Les résultats montrent comment l'ESC, en tant que cadre, peut concrètement révéler les points de tension aux niveaux macro et micro afin de s'attaquer aux barrières systémiques et de défier le racisme et la discrimination institutionnels en FLS. L'utilisation de cette perspective conceptuelle peut aider à transformer et à élargir la façon dont les expériences des étudiants dans le programme de FLS sont comprises et peut informer les pratiques pédagogiques des éducateurs et des chercheurs canadiens qui travaillent avec des populations vulnérables, racialisées et/ou culturellement et linguistiquement diverses.

Mots clés : Français langue seconde, intersectionnalité, enseignement sensible à la culture, jeunes culturellement et linguistiquement diversifiés, antiracisme.

Introduction

In Canada, the exclusion of marginalized groups, such as English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with learning disabilities (LDs) is an ongoing challenge in French as a second language (FSL) education (Arnett & Mady, 2010; Mady, 2012). However, little has been noted about the exclusion of linguistically and culturally diverse youth, who often make up a large proportion of racialized bodies in FSL programs. Using antiracist and anti-oppressive lenses can bring into focus the complex interactions between different forms of social status, discourses, ideologies and power that permeate any schooling context. The present paper is a reflective exercise on the implications of applying antiracist and anti-oppressive educational lenses to acknowledge intersectional identity-markers of students in FSL, and how these might shape FSL curriculum delivery. First, I explain the settler colonial history of Canadian FSL programs and the impact of the dominant Anglo-Christian perspective on marginalized and racialized students. Second, I define culturally responsive teaching, which is founded on antiracist and anti-oppressive principles, to examine data from one FSL teacher's practice. The findings provide insight into how this FSL teacher negotiates intersectionality in their practice and what institutional or ideological barriers they face. My hope is to identify systemic challenges and further the discussions of using a conceptual lens that invites us to question the way we look at our students and their experiences in the program. I also hope it can inform the pedagogical practices of FSL educators and researchers working with vulnerable, racialized and/or culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

1. Context for the study

In the following sections, I outline the socio-political context of French as a second language education in Canada, and key second language ideologies that shape the way educators and researchers interact with student populations in FSL.

1.1. French as a second language (FSL) in the Canadian settler colonial context

In the Canadian context, educational curricula are determined by each individual province and territory. Because the federal government mandated French as an official language in 1969 through the *Official Languages Act* (OLA), almost every province and territory in the country offers some form of FSL programming. This federal policy of promoting French-English bilingualism, also referred to as official bilingualism, has been absorbed into the consciousness of educators and parents alike as a desirable and attainable goal for young Canadian children. Usually, FSL is delivered through one of two programs¹: French immersion, which is an immersive bilingual program where students take at least 50% of their courses in French (i.e., Math, Science, Physical Education); and, the core French program in which French is the object of study during second language classes, which can range from one lesson period to several periods a week.

As a settler colonial state, linguistic imperialism has been a pervasive feature in Canadian educational policy and practices: the *Official Languages Act* being one example of how language policies privilege French, one of the original settler languages brought to Canada with European colonization. The OLA was a means to provide minority French-speaking populations the recognition and status they sought after many years of discrimination, however this came at a cost for other language groups. French language and culture lives in an in-between space, simultaneously privileged as an official language and marginalized in many Anglo-dominant spaces across Canada.

Since the arrival of European settlers, the English-French dualism in Canada has been an ongoing site of struggle, further complexified with the arrival of other language groups (through immigration after Europeans were

¹ FSL programs of instruction for K-12 students in anglophone schools in Canada include core French (CF), French immersion (FI), extended French (EF) and intensive French (IF). For a more detailed description see Red Deer Public Schools (2014).

established in Canada) and more recently with the acknowledgement of the pre-established languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples who have been severely affected by European colonization (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Ultimately, even today English language and Anglo-protestant culture continues to assert power over French-speakers through linguistic and symbolic dominance in society and schools (Heller & McLaughlin, 2008).

The OLA also had consequences for other language groups. It spurred a reactionary multicultural education movement from non-English and non-French speaking communities in Canada to acknowledge and recognize other languages and cultures that have long been present, but ignored or silenced (Thobani, 2007). In reality, around 20% of the population is born outside of Canada and almost 5% identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit). Most new immigrants are people of colour coming from Asia (which includes the Middle East), and populations from Africa, the Caribbean, Central and Southern America are increasing (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Canada now has over 22% of the population that speaks a language other than French and English and over 200 different languages present, including Indigenous languages (Statistics Canada, 2017b). In 1988, the federal government instituted the *Multiculturalism Act* to recognize multiculturalism as an inherent trait and contributing factor to the development of Canadian society. While some may consider this to be a step in the right direction in terms of acknowledging the presence of other language groups in Canada, Thobani (2007) critiques the *Multiculturalism Act* as a calculated measure of the French/English government to further entrench its dominance after it was solidly established and had power to “include” others within a Eurocentric framework. Indeed, the symbolic gesture has led to little concrete changes, and in some cases, further marginalization of non-French/English language groups that have remain tokenized and essentialized by educational practices that limit themselves to advocating for and celebrating diversity without considering the deeper societal implications for Indigenous

students and students of colour in Canadian society (Thobani, 2007). Critiques of such liberal multicultural education practices (Kubota, 2004) harken back to the *Multiculturalism Act*, seen as a purposeful act of assimilation meeting the government's goal to be seen a benevolent or liberal, all the while maintaining power. Indeed, multicultural educational policy documents lack clear and concrete indications on the status of minority and marginalized students, their language and their culture in Canadian society (other than to represent 'diversity'), and the role educational institutions should play at the provincial level in challenging the continued marginalization of diverse languages and cultural identities in schools (Cummins, 1988). Fundamentally, the challenge to implementing multicultural education that truly values, promotes and engages with minority groups' contributions to Canadian society has been the dominance of white Anglo-Christian settler colonial perspectives through which minority perspectives and experiences are often filtered which promote an assimilationist policy (Carroll, 2018).

1.2. Language ideologies in FSL and the implications on how we understand our students

FSL programs and curricula, set up in English-language school boards, have largely reproduced the tendencies of English and French language domination over other racial and ethnolinguistic groups. This has become apparent, for example, in the way English language learners (ELLs) have been defined in Canada. ELLs, are often represented as a homogeneous group, unified by the fact that they are (often) immigrants who speak languages other than French and English, and in the process of learning English. I feel compelled to point out that this is a general trend in FSL, and the term is one that I myself have applied in my research papers (e.g., Mady & Masson, 2018). I seek to problematize my research perspective by asking what is implied in the way that we frame learners' identities as "English language learners".

Hence, working from the understanding that Canada is a colonial state impacts the way we conceive of our students, our teachers, our policies and our materials developed in/for FSL programs and research. For instance, the effect of representing ELLs as a homogeneous group devoid of cultural or racial identities erases the rich diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds students bring to the FSL program. It also constructs the identity-marker of ELLs as a multicultural 'other' against two dominant social groups (English- and French-speakers²) that have traditionally held more power in Canada, and invisibilizes Indigenous peoples' existence, past and present. This reveals a lack of focus in FSL that can work to the detriment of our students, teachers, educators and researchers trying to understand how to better the program and students' learning outcomes, an issue that has already been identified by FSL teachers of colour (e.g., Farooq, 2021).

For instance, how do current perspectives promote or perpetuate the erasure of students' social and ethnocultural identities? What happens when race, religious-affiliation, or socioeconomic status are absent from the discussions about our FSL students? Often this results in overlooking biases associated with race or ethnicity and the systemic reinforcement of power struggles that exist which privileges white, Christian, middle-class people and discourse.

Given the increasing ethnocultural diversity in Canadian schools (Statistics Canada, 2014), the FSL curriculum needs to be supplemented with antiracist and anti-oppressive educational practices, such as culturally responsive teaching, to prevent further marginalization or erasure of racialized and Indigenous students' identities and the dilution of key concepts from multicultural education into a celebration of holidays and cuisines.

² We must note that English-speakers and French-speakers are themselves not a homogeneous group.

2. Conceptual Framework

In the following section, I outline key principles of antiracist and anti-oppressive education, as well as the foundational characteristics of Culturally responsive teaching, which make up the conceptual lens through which the subsequent data are examined.

2.1. *Antiracist and anti-oppressive education*

Applying antiracist and anti-oppressive lenses makes visible systematic exclusion and oppression, namely, the impact that institutionalized racism or exclusion can have on student learning and experiences in the FSL program. Antiracist education seeks to attain social and educational justice for minority students (Dei, 1993). In particular, antiracist education addresses the systemic and institutional barriers in place that perpetuate the discrimination, exploitation, exclusion and oppression of non-white, Christian, middle-class people. From an antiracist perspective, recognizing that diversity is not a homogenous and fixed condition is key. It calls on educators to consider how structural inequity glosses over intracultural or intraethnic differences such as they might be represented across social class, gender, sexuality or ability. For instance, for many FSL educators, it is still quite difficult to understand, assess and make professional decisions when it comes to representing *la francophonie* – that is, the global French-speaking community. Often standard Parisian French culture and language is privileged over local Canadian varieties of French, such as Québécois, Acadian, Fransaskois, or Franco-Ontarian French (e.g., Roy 2012). All of these varieties of French are often associated with whiteness. Meanwhile, other French-speaking communities, particularly those from Black communities, such as Louisiana, Cameroon, or Ivory Coast are not included in the discourse about who speaks French and the racial make-up of members of *la francophonie*. In fact, the majority of French speakers around the world (44.4%) are Black or Brown and live in Sub-Saharan Africa and the area around the Indian Ocean

(Quéméner, et. al., 2019, cited in Faroogh, 2021). FSL teachers may or may not be aware of what varieties of French they are promoting and why and how these might influence students' representation of French; they need more opportunities to explore how to account for these realities in their practice.

Similarly, anti-oppressive education seeks to draw attention to the ways in which discrimination is systemically embedded and (re)constructed in educational policy and practices by actively challenging social inequity and oppression which occurs at the micro-level in the classroom and the macro-level in educational or curriculum reform (Kumashiro, 2000). For instance, accounting for visible and invisible influencers, such as the hidden curriculum (Jay, 2003), can help educators consider what is implicitly taught to students by the choices teachers make in the cultures they represent and the way they represent them. Encouraging educators to reflect on the 'common sense' (Kumashiro, 2015) practices that permeate everyday life in schools can help educators reflect on what values are being passed on to students as 'common sense' regarding language practices. In second language education, the pervasive 'common sense principle' (Cummins, 2007) promotes the idea that it is too difficult for children to learn more than one language at a time. It harkens back to a time when being bilingual went against the grain in many 'monocultural' nation states, including Canada, and was vilified (Pavlenko, 2006). Today, this ideology persists and contributes to the ongoing exclusion of ELLs (Mady & Masson, 2018), many of whom are racialized students.

In Canada, antiracist and anti-oppressive educational frameworks both work at the systems level to address educators' perspectives and develop capacity for calling into question ingrained beliefs and practices coming from the dominant white Eurocentric perspectives. Indeed, this can be explored at several levels. For instance, we know that teachers' perceptions about their students and their abilities has a significant impact on their achievement and well-being in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2011). At the macro-level, research has also

identified the lack of representation in the curriculum as one of the top reasons for students who drop out of high school.

Curriculum is frequently cited in the research literature as the major cause of early school dropout (or push-out) among many Aboriginal and other ethnic minority students, largely because of its omission of the histories, languages and cultural values of these students and its commission of education that is unjust and unequal. (Kanu, 2011, p. 16)

How might this apply in FSL where analysis of federal language policy reveals a silencing of official bilingualism opportunities for multilingual youth in contradiction with federal policy which promotes multiculturalism (Mady & Turnbull, 2010)? In terms of provincial and territorial curricula, it is not yet clear how language policies account for racially, linguistically and culturally diverse youth in FSL. This gap exists despite research citing consistent and strong student attrition rates in FSL programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2017). Students' experiences with FSL curricula has largely been explored in terms of motivation through socio-cognitive models (e.g., MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Mady, Arnett, & Arnett, 2018), re-centering the issue on students as individuals and potentially overlooking the broader impact of systemic oppression and representation of racially, linguistically and culturally diverse youth in FSL.

Antiracist and anti-oppressive principles lay the foundation for inviting critical reflective thinking into the area of FSL that explores why and how systemic and institutional issues of power, dominance and status affect students and teachers. Putting these educational perspectives into practice can occur through many different ways, such as culturally responsive teaching, a pedagogical approach officially recommended by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008).

2.2. Culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a student-centered approach that draws on the unique cultural perspectives and backgrounds of students to support their learning. According to Richards, Brown and Forde (2006), CRT

operates on three levels: institutional, personal and instructional. The institutional dimension involves considering the values that are promoted by the administrators and the school and/or district as a whole. The personal dimension touches on the cognitive and emotional processes teachers must engage in to become culturally responsive teachers. The instructional dimension corresponds to the materials, strategies and techniques teachers will use to inform their culturally responsive practice. From antiracist and anti-oppressive perspectives, the institutional dimension brings the focus on systemic oppression and importance of power imbalances or top down approaches, the personal dimension involves challenging teacher bias and taking their positionality into consideration, and the instructional dimension involves identifying the 'common sense' principles that permeate teachers practice and the sorts of texts and discourses used to represent French language and culture.

One of the defining traits of CRT is how the teacher re-positions themselves and their students towards learning, moving away from a deficit-based approach when teaching: "Culturally responsive educators hold positive and affirming views of their students and their ability to learn and achieve academic success. They demonstrate genuine respect for students and their families as well as a strong belief in their potential." (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4). For the culturally responsive teacher, students' unique cultural and social identities become embedded in the learning program as assets which enrich the classroom learning environment and form the foundation upon which students can grow.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) identify six characteristics that make up culturally responsive teaching, outlined in Table 1.

Table 1.

Six characteristics of culturally responsive teaching

Characteristics	Examples in practice
1. Socio-cultural consciousness	<i>e.g., having awareness of the privileges and biases you hold</i>
2. High expectations	<i>e.g., respecting students, seeing differences as asset, not allowing self-fulfilling bias</i>
3. Making a difference	<i>e.g., seeing barriers as systemic not individualistic, and work towards removing barriers</i>
4. Using a constructivist approach	<i>e.g., seeing learning as building on interests and experiences, co-constructing curriculum</i>
5. Having a deep knowledge/ understanding of your students	<i>e.g., building relationships with caregivers, reflecting lived realities in teaching</i>
6. Practicing culturally-responsive teaching	<i>e.g., fostering an environment where learning matters to the students</i>

As the authors explain, “these six qualities serve as the organizing framework for infusing attention to diversity throughout the [...] curriculum. They represent the conceptual strands to be woven throughout the learning experiences [...]” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 30). Therefore, these characteristics make up the analytical framework I use to examine how one FSL teacher embodied CRT in their practice.

In this paper, I argue that antiracist and anti-oppressive education, applied through pedagogical models such as CRT, can reframe FSL teachers’ and students’ experiences in Canadian FSL programs to account for institutionalized forms of racism and discrimination. As such, my research questions are: *How does intersectionality affect FSL teachers’ practice at the institutional, personal and practical levels? How do FSL teachers account for racialized and marginalized youth in their practice?*

3. Methodology

In the following section, I outline the background for this study, the focal participant and the collection, selection and treatment of the data for analysis.

3.1. *The study*

I took part in an ethnographic multiple case study which examined teacher inquiries and development through a teacher-led professional learning community (PLC) from 2011 to 2015. The PLC brought together teachers from various school boards in Ontario and Michigan, who taught different subject matters (e.g., Math, Language Arts, Social Studies) at different school panels (i.e., elementary, middle or secondary). The teachers met at the start of each school year to debrief and set professional learning goals for the coming year. Throughout the school year, the teachers met monthly to describe their professional inquiries and update the PLC through an online forum.

My area of specialization is in language teacher training and professional identity development, therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I focus exclusively on one FSL teacher involved in the project.

3.2. *Focal participant*

For the purposes of this article, I will focus on Christina, a Brown FSL teacher of South Asian descent who learned French as an additional language, among other languages. Christina, a full-time core French teacher who also teaches Drama and Social Studies at a middle school (Gr. 6-8), worked in a school with a large number of racially, culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The school, with a population of under 1000 students, was located in a large middle-class urban city in south-western Ontario. Upon joining the study, Christina had between 5-10 years of teaching experience. Christina describes her work context thusly: "For the majority of my students, French is a third language. Many of them speak Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Urdu, Arabic, Yoruba, Twi, Pashto, Dari, Somali or Patois at home. Although they were born in Canada,

many of my students only began learning English when they started school. Almost all of them have been studying core French since grade four.” (February 2013).

3.3. Data collection

Data were gathered every time the teachers met for online and face to face meetings. It was video and/or audio recorded, then transcribed. The forum posts teachers shared with the PLC were also collected and teachers took part in interviews and surveys during the study to provide insight into their experience with the PLC. Throughout, the research team gathered field notes and documents (e.g., artefacts shared by the teachers, pictures of meetings, etc.). For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the data gathered when the teachers met together during their monthly meetings and when they exchanged ideas in the online forum.

3.4. Data analysis

I use narrative analysis (Ochs & Capps, 2009) to understand teachers’ work through ‘small stories’ (Bamberg, 2004). Small stories are often “immediately reworked slices of life” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 4), such as recent events, projected future events or retellings of past experiences characterized by interactional exchanges with others that help the teller make sense of their experience(s) over time. They are particularly useful to understand teachers’ identity work on the macro level (institutional) and the micro level (personal/instructional).

I apply a critical interpretivist approach to dealing with qualitative data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011) to explore if and how antiracist and anti-oppressive pedagogies and the characteristics of CRT are present throughout Christina’s narratives. In practice, I moved back and forth between the literature, the conceptual framework I laid out and the small stories selected for data analysis. As part of the iterative process, I also want to take into account my positionality

as a white middle-class woman raised by a francophone family of Catholic heritage in an Anglo-dominant context. Specifically, wherever possible, I aim to identify and challenge my biases or frames of reference that may be limited due to the racial privileges I have benefitted from in Canada.

The next section showcases a series of Christina's small stories, which she will tell herself. Since the stories were told over several months, if not years, through interactions and retellings with other teachers in the PLC, they have been edited here for clarity and conciseness, however, they remain verbatim. After each story, I will discuss Christina's FSL teaching practice through antiracist and anti-oppressive lenses using the CRT framework outlined above.

4. Findings and discussion

Christina's small stories, examined through a CRT lens, convey how one FSL teacher creates meaningful learning experiences for her racialized students, whose experiences and perspectives are often marginalized in the FSL curriculum by creating a unit founded on discussions about social justice and anti-oppression.

Small story 1 (November 2013)

1	When my students come to me in grades seven and eight they have been
2	studying French for four or five years. However, both my students and I are
3	painfully aware that they cannot speak French. Most of them speak English as a
4	Second Language so they know they are able to learn more than one language.
5	My students wonder why they cannot speak French after they've been studying it
6	for years. Their lack of fluency leads to a lack of motivation and, by the end of
7	grade nine most Core French students drop French because they can't speak it
8	after studying it for six years. If they have not learned anything new in French
9	class and have not even learned much French, then there really isn't any point in
10	continuing to study French.

In this story, Christina identifies a programmatic barrier with the FSL curriculum which does not meet its objective to "increase [...] a students' ability to communicate in French" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 15). In line with culturally responsive pedagogy, Christina does not hold her students as individual responsible for the programmatic failure of the FSL program. She

takes the onus off students, who “know they are able to learn more than one language” (line 4) and positions them as capable learners, signaling her high expectations for these unfulfilled learners. Instead, she addresses the FSL program delivery model that fails students who wonder “why they cannot speak French after they have been studying it for years” (line 5). This raises questions about the institutional value of French within Ontario school boards. To put this into context, students attending English Language-Arts or Math classes “for four or five years” (line 2) without progressing, or feeling like they have not learned anything after studying it, should be very serious issue for schools, and yet, in FSL, this does not seem to be a concern school boards want to address.

Small story 2 (January 2014)

11	To be honest. There was nothing I could really use from the board. They have this
12	[redacted Drama resource name], which they have in French and English. But to be
13	honest, I thought some of the play is a little bit... a little superficial. Like, not
14	exactly where I want it to go. So, what I ended up doing is-- I ended up looking
15	up my own videos. I found this really really interesting one on being
16	transgender. It was about this little girl named Jaz. And it was an Oprah segment.
17	And for me, that was kind of surprising because I'd never really considered -
18	like, we always talked about homophobia, being gay, being lesbian, but never
19	really about the transgender topic. And this happened last year when I found it.
20	And one of my students from the prior year. She knew I was interested in this.
21	She was in grade 8. I was teaching grade 7. She told me about the video. So, then I
22	went to watch it. And I was like, “Wow, I never considered that.” And it started
23	making me think, you know. If this was my child, how would I feel? And how
24	would I feel about how the other students would treat my child? And all these
25	things came up. [...] And so, I took it to my students.

Despite Ministry documentation that outlines and promotes equity and inclusive practices in teaching (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009), as a South Asian woman of colour, Christina judges the resources provided by her board superficial and deems them unusable. The practical- and institutional-level implications suggest that board-sanctioned resources are not appropriately designed for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. This forms a catalyst for Christina to develop her own teaching program in her FSL class, which is in itself a form of systemic oppression. Because of the disconnect

between board policy and the resources offered, this impacts Christina's practice at the micro-level (e.g., in terms of what she can do in the classroom with said resource to meet board objectives). Having identified a gap in the resources provided by her board (line 10-13), Christina searches for videos to explore intersectionality and identity through drama with her students. She comes across the topic of transgender identity, a social identity she admits having little experience with (line 16). Yet, she engages in crucial self-reflective questions, practicing empathy, to understand what the world might look like from that perspective, asking herself critical questions about gender identities on a personal level (line 22), and on a professional level (line 23). Christina develops socio-cultural awareness identifying a perspective she has "never really considered" (line 17). Christina also positions her students as integral contributors to curriculum development. She practices dialogic exchange with her students, learning from and with them: her FSL program changes stem from resources students share with her (line 21), and discussions she "takes" to her students (line 25). Here, Christina is re-positioning herself and the students as active co-creators of the FSL curriculum using a constructivist approach.

Small story 3 (January 2014)

26	And so, when I set up the social justice unit-- it's something I did in the March-
27	April time. Because I believe at the beginning of the year, it was more important
28	for me to build my relationship with my students. Get them to trust me and
29	understand me. To see that I care about them. So, I worked on actual French
30	grammar. I went through all the verbs. I went through using them in context. I
31	would actually make them little skits and they would act them out. And then
32	after that, I had them starting to write their own skits. And then I had them start
33	filming them and making them into videos, just on whatever they wanted. So, we
34	did all that, before we went to [the social justice unit]. Cause this would be too
35	hard to start with. And they would trust me and know me and care at that point,
36	right? [...]

Christina reveals a deep sense of understanding and respect for her students, using words such as "trust" (line 28) and "care" (line 29). In fact, she explains that building a relationship (line 28) is her first priority to engage in meaningful learning with her students. Here, she positions the teacher as a caregiver, one that

does not exert authority ‘over’ students, but seeks to bring them as valued members of the FSL classroom. She then describes how she scaffolds the learners’ interaction with constructing French texts (i.e., skits) using a gradual release of responsibility: teaching them the vocabulary and language they need, showing how to use them in context, practicing with skits she created for them, and transitioning to letting them create the skits. Again, this is an example of how the students are positioned to co-construct the French curriculum with her.

Small story 4 (January 2014)

37 So, by the time it was March-April, they knew me well. They understood what
 38 we were doing. They were well advanced on the French trajectory and so then,
 39 what I started doing then, is for one week, we had basically the class was all in
 40 English. I said, “This week, we're having it in English because I want to define
 41 some of the terminology.” Because they didn't know a lot of these terms. Like,
 42 different types of exclusion. And we had to talk about classism and talk about all
 43 these different things. And sexism. And we actually went through all of these
 44 different terms first. But we did it in English. And then we did like a concept
 45 transfer. And we put them in French. So, they had all the definitions in French,
 46 that we already established in English. And they understood well in English, and
 47 then they understood them in French after. Cause it would have been too much
 48 to throw it on them in French. Cause it's a lot of stuff to think about. And they
 49 wanted to talk about their own personal experiences in English, cause it would be
 50 hard to do so in French at first. So, once we did that, then I had this week where I
 51 showed them all these videos. [...]

52 Basically, [I showed them] a lot of videos where it was all about kids and young
 53 people trying to do something positive. And you know, trying to confront
 54 different types of exclusion in their communities or their context. And so, the kids
 55 were really excited by what they saw. “And so now, we're going to do the same
 56 thing. I want you to-- out of all of these things we defined,” we did about nine of
 57 them, between race and gender, homophobia and classism and a whole bunch of
 58 things, and shadism, you know, whatever it may be. I said, “I want you to pick
 59 the one you feel most passionate about. For whatever reason, cause you've been
 60 through something with this, it's something that's touched you. And, you know,
 61 that's the one that you're going to be representing.” So, they all went into groups
 62 and they picked the one they wanted to do it on. I made sure that each group
 63 picked one of the topics. So, we had all of them. I said, “Now I want you guys to
 64 write a script about it.” And so then, after that they ended up making these
 65 scripts, and the way I mark their writing is I sat with them, and went through
 66 each group's script. And then I'd correct it. And then, depending on how many

67 corrections I had to make. And some of the groups couldn't write the script. It
68 was too hard. So, I did it with them. And they would help me write the script. So,
69 we do it together. So that was fine. And in the end, they got the script. And so,
70 then they practiced. And they practiced and practiced. And they had to make
71 videos. So, it's not like acting. You know, they had to-- you know, you're making
72 a video. It's going to last, you might put it on YouTube. It has to be good.

In this small story, Christina provides details about her practice teaching FSL. She uses social justice as a vehicle for engaging her students with French to go beyond learning decontextualized grammar and vocabulary and involve the students emotionally and intellectually, again signaling a deep amount of caring and understanding of her students as racialized individuals and positioning her learners as active agents in the co-construction of the curriculum, bringing their lived experiences into the French classroom.

She also uses students' other languages, namely English in this example, as a resource to expand the reach of her students when engaging with complex issues such as social discrimination and oppression (lines 89-45). In second language education, students' first language (or other languages) can be a powerful tool for students to clarify their thoughts when it comes to procedural knowledge (e.g., how to do an activity) (Anton & Di Camilla, 1998), or clarify their opinions on matters before discussing them in the target language. This can then facilitate cross-linguistic transfer (Ballinger, 2013) which posits that students can cognitively transfer concepts, principles and ideas they learn from one language into another, when students encounter new terms and ideas (lines 44-48).

Christina skillfully maneuvers to provide representation for her students: She shows them videos of other children challenging discrimination to inspire them to create their own skits (lines 52-54). She folds in intersectional identities expressed through religion, gender and race (lines 57-58) into the classroom discussion to make room for the unique backgrounds and experiences of each of her students. This allows Christina and her students to work with/through their 'diversity' in ways that do not essentialize or homogenize them.

Small story 5 (October 2014)

74	Here is a video about Islamophobia created by four of my [Muslim] students
75	from my core French class. The video depicts the paranoia of mainstream society
76	towards Muslims and the misconception that all Muslims are terrorists. In the
77	video, two men see a Muslim civilian praying and call the cops, assuming he is a
78	terrorist. The cop arrives and threatens to detain the Muslim if he doesn't tell the
79	cop where the bombs are. The Muslim explains that he is simply praying, that he
80	is a target of Islamophobia and that Muslims are not terrorists.

In this small story, Christina describes what her students created. Opening the door for students to draw on their experiences as racialized English-speakers in Canada, Christina transforms students' interaction with the FSL curriculum. Christina challenges the hidden curriculum (Jay, 2003), which can implicitly promote values that are alien or exclusionary towards racialized students. In the case of the FSL curriculum in Canada, middle-class Christian values predominate, making the Muslim faith of French-speakers less present. In fact, the message these students seem to have received from society is that Islam is a 'dangerous' faith that can get you unjustly arrested or questioned by the authorities (lines 88-90). Christina lets them challenge this oppressive notion by letting her Muslim students explore the "paranoia of mainstream society towards Muslims and the misconception that all Muslims are terrorists" (line 75-76). Sadly, Islamophobia within the French-speaking community is reality in Canada: in January 2017, a white man shot and killed 6 Muslim men worshipping in a Quebec City mosque. More recently, in June 2021 in London, Ontario a white man murdered 4 members of a Muslim family while they were out for a walk. Islamophobia is a topic that reaches across language, culture and identity: One that is essential for FSL educators to be cognizant of, specifically as francophone Muslims make up a marginalized minority of French speakers in Canada.

Small story 6 (February 2014)

81 [I'm looking at] if their oral French is augmented. If they get better at, and more
82 confident when they're speaking in French and they want to speak in French.
83 And also, their motivation because they're talking about issues of identity. Which
84 is something they're exploring considering their age as well as their identity.
85 Like, as people who have more than one culture, or hybrid cultures or even more
86 than that, within themselves. Then, they're more interested. Because it's content
87 that's meaningful for them. It's not just, like, vocab and you know, verbs on the
88 board. And so now they want to learn this language so they can use it to say
89 what they want to say because we're doing something interesting. So, that's what
90 it is. But then at the same time. I'm also-- we're doing the social justice thing.

Christina not only positions herself as a caregiver, but as having a moral obligation to empower her students to question the discourses upheld about their communities in Canadian society, particularly as many of them are linguistically or culturally diverse youth that do not conform to white, Christian, middle-class values. She is also aware of the importance of addressing the intersectionality of race, gender, religion, sexuality (among others) for young minority adolescents in FSL, it “is something they're exploring considering their age as well as their identity. Like, as people who have more than one culture, or hybrid cultures or even more than that, within themselves” (line 84-86). In this way, when she promotes high expectations for her students, she is able to motivate them because she respects and understands who they are as individuals who have to navigate complex socio-cultural and political issues in their everyday lives.

Conclusion

The analysis outlined above provides insight into the research questions: *How does intersectionality affect FSL teachers' practice at the institutional, personal and practical levels? How do FSL teachers account for racialized and marginalized youth in their practice?* Drawing on antiracist and anti-oppressive education principles reveals how Christina addresses systemic barriers and oppression at the micro-level (personal and practical) and macro-level (institutional), and how these affected her students' learning experience. She goes beyond reproducing

traditional approaches for teaching French to develop her own culturally responsive approach that addresses a problem she has identified across the FSL curriculum. Specifically, she targets 1) the lack of representation of her plurilingual students' intersectional identities and 2) how to position students as active knowledge-creators and contributors to the curriculum. Christina operates on both the macro- and micro-level to respond to both of these issues which she believes can help address student motivation and retention in FSL.

Christina tackles the disconnect between FSL as a living language and culture and students' own lived experiences as multilingual speakers. As a woman of colour herself, Christina is keenly aware that having racialized multilingual students in her French classroom changes the dynamics of how French is typically taught. Christina's practice allows her to address complex issues in FSL, such as the relationship between French culture and Islam in Canada and the systemic oppression of Muslim Francophones in Canada.

This case study is not meant to be representative: Christina's small stories only represent one way that FSL teachers can challenge inequities in the FSL curriculum. Understanding the complexity and diversity of student populations learning French in Canada is a complicated process, particularly when intersections of race, gender, immigrant-status, religious affiliation and other identity markers are fully taken into account. However, it is undeniable that these intersectional markers can have deep and unique impacts on teachers' implementation of the FSL curriculum in their classes. In this paper, I argue for a closer look at the settler colonial history and status of FSL, to consider systemic and oppressive power struggles as they affect the multifaceted identities of FSL students and how this might in turn, impact their learning or experiences in the program. Antiracist and anti-oppressive lenses can help better prepare teachers to deal with institutionalized racism and discrimination support, and empower marginalized and racialized students for success in FSL.

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