

Challenges And Advantages of Being Multilingual: Teenagers' Views

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Abstract

Being multilinguals and what it means for its speakers can vary in specific contexts. Speaking different languages in Europe or Africa is different than in a Western Canadian province where English is dominant. Even if Canada has two Official Languages (French and English), several indigenous languages and multilingual speakers, teenagers from different backgrounds might have different reasons to learn English and French and keep their heritage languages. In this presentation, we look at discourses of youth from an immigrant background in trying to understand the value they give to languages in a specific context. We interviewed high school students in two French immersion schools (2020 and 2022 data sets) on their multilingualism and the importance of their languages in their communities. Using a sociolinguistic for change framework (Roy, 2020) in addition to Bourdieu's theory on language and power (1991), this presentation will focus on what are the challenges for youths such as 'mixing languages' or 'losing one language' and what are the benefits such as 'if someone doesn't speak English, I can speak to them'. Our discussion will focus on how linguistic ideologies should be looked at from complexities and changes in a local context (Pennycook, 2010; 2017) or as a Linguistic Ideological Assemblage (Kroskrity, 2021).

The discourses are coming from teenagers who see the world differently due to their linguistic repertoires and diverse cultural identities even if powerful discourses of monolingual bias and the domination of English still prevail (Saxena, & Omoniyi, 2010)

Keywords: discourses, linguistic ideologies, sociolinguistics, language learners