

LINGUISTIC INSECURITY AND ITS IMPACT ON FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES

Linguistic insecurity...
Does it mean anything
to you?



TOPICS COVERED:



A definition of linguistic insecurity



The causes of linguistic insecurity



The consequences of linguistic insecurity for Francophone communities



Linguistic insecurity and its impact on French-language health services



Consequences for health professionals

WHAT IS LINGUISTIC INSECURITY?

“Linguistic insecurity is a perception, a belief or a feeling that the language variety one uses or the way one speaks a particular language is not legitimate or valued in society. People usually measure their own language practices against what is viewed as a superior or standard language in society”.

(Wernicke, 2021)

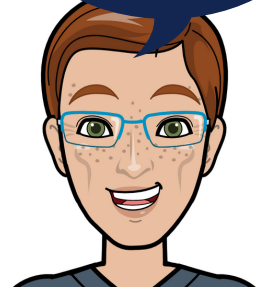
Individuals become aware of the difference between the language they speak and the language they believe is the “correct language”. This awareness may create a sense of inferiority. (Sabatier & Laghzaoui, 2016)

See this video for more information (in French) :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YSNSoHIS4E>



Do you sometimes feel uncomfortable when speaking French?



THE CAUSES OF LINGUISTIC INSECURITY



ON A PERSONAL LEVEL,

research reveals several explanations for linguistic insecurity. It is believed to come from one humiliating intervention or comment related to the use of language. Also mentioned is a context that threatens, hurts or humiliates an individual. (FJCF, 2020)

ON A COLLECTIVE LEVEL,

two other factors have a negative impact on the ease with which Francophones express themselves in their mother tongue: the domination of the English language, associated with socioeconomic prestige, and the fact that the Francophone community itself is stringent toward a level of French that does not conform to a certain standard, even when this standard is foreign. (Cormier, 2015)

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LINGUISTIC INSECURITY FOR FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES



Linguistic insecurity leads to negative reactions concerning the way of speaking learned in one's environment. The speaker will tend to fluctuate between the two official languages and make special efforts to autocorrect. The individual becomes acutely aware of being part of a minority and recognizes the languages skills that need to be improved to move up in terms of career or social life.

Individuals may choose to follow the majority, using English, not insisting on receiving health services in French (Drolet et al., 2015). Therefore, linguistic insecurity may wipe away or erode a community's vitality.

LINGUISTIC INSECURITY AND ITS IMPACT ON FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES



Due to linguistic insecurity, clients may choose to use English as the language of service. As a result, they find themselves in situations that may jeopardize their health, if:

- They cannot clearly describe their symptoms
- Do not know the words that will allow them to nuance their description of the pain they feel
- They omit to mention some aspects of their medical history, because they are too difficult to describe

Consequence for health professionals

Did you know?

Health professionals also bear the negative consequences of linguistic insecurity. The constant need to navigate between French and English, while having to function mainly in English, may lead them to lose confidence in their French-language skills. When dealing with other Francophone speakers, these professionals may fear that their level of French falls short.

REFERENCES



Cormier, Y. (2015). e... euh... je... L'insécurité linguistique chez les communautés francophones du Canada. *Franquêtes*. Enquête sur l'éducation en milieu minoritaire francophone, 11, en ligne à <https://www.ctf-fce.ca/Publication-Library/FRENQUETES-11-2015-Insecuritelinguistique-Article-integral.pdf>

Drolet, M., Arcand, I., Benoît, J., Savard, J., Savard, S. & Lagacé, J. (2015). Agir pour avoir accès à des services sociaux et de santé en français : des Francophones en situation minoritaire nous enseignent quoi faire! *Revue canadienne de service social*, 32 (1-2), 5-26. doi : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1034141ar>

Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF). (2020), Stratégie nationale pour la sécurité linguistique.. Tiré le 26 mai 2021 de : https://www.snsf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FJCF_2020_SNSL_Document_FR_RGB.pdf

Wernicke, M. (2021). (In)sécurité linguistique : de quoi parle-t-on? (2021). *Gazette de l'Université d'Ottawa*. Tiré le 26 mai 2021 de: <https://www.uottawa.ca/gazette/fr/nouvelles/insecurite-linguistique-quoi-parle-t>

Laghzaoui, G. & Sabatier, C. (2016). Comprendre et gérer l'insécurité linguistique : Le phénomène de l'insécurité linguistique chez les jeunes. *Congrès de la Fédération des parents francophones de la Colombie-Britannique Richmond*. Tiré le 27 mai 2021 de: http://www.fpfcb.bc.ca/files/atelier_-_il_-_nov._2016.pdf