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# Examining the interaction between language attitudes, cultural identity, and self-rated L2 proficiency: the case of Flemish students learning French and English

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Dissertation submitted to the University of Oxford in part-fulfilment of the degree of Master of Science in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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الى والدي ووالدتي، عبدالله وعائشة، اللذان لم يغب دعمهما لي يوما. أشكر الله على الحب والفخر الذي أبى أن يفارقكم، أنتما نعمتي في هذة الحياة. الحمد لله على كل شئ.

## Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore the interaction between Flemish secondary school students' language attitudes, their cultural identity, and their self-rated L2 proficiency for English and French. The study also investigated the influence of (a) age, (b) gender, (c) SES, (d) classification as monolingual or multilingual, (e) self-identification as monolingual or multilingual, (f) self-perceived competence level, (g) knowledge of a language outside the curriculum, and (h) language contact or exposure outside of school on Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English. A mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis was employed. Quantitative data was collected through an online questionnaire and analysed using tests of difference and association, and qualitative data was collected through semi-structured follow-up interviews and analysed thematically. Overall, the findings revealed that Flemish students' attitudes are complex and language-specific, with more positive attitudes towards English than French, which students attributed to the difficulty of the language and the less enjoyable French classes. The results also showed an effect of gender, self-identification as monolingual or multilingual, self-perceived competence level, and language contact or exposure outside of school. Although no relationship was found between cultural identity and language attitudes, the findings did indicate that language attitudes towards French and English are positively correlated with self-rated proficiency for English or French respectively. Such findings highlight the need for L2 language educators and material developers in Flanders to focus on improving students' learning experience with French by balancing the time spent on grammar rules with engaging (speaking) activities.

Word count: 19,978

## Introduction

Multilingual regions and countries provide an interesting terrain for researchers with an interest in language attitudes. Yet, very few research studies on language attitudes have focussed on contexts in which learners are juggling three or more languages at the same time, or contexts where more than one foreign language is present (Dewaele, 2005a; Lasagabaster, 2005). Repression of minority languages in countries such as Spain and Belgium (Dewaele, 2005a; Lasagabaster, 2017) has revealed in those contexts a strong link between language and identity. In bilingual regions in Spain, the co-existence of Spanish with minority languages (i.e. Catalan and Basque), as well as the rising need to learn English as a foreign language, has given way to linguistic models with varying levels of minority and foreign language integration (Lasagabaster, 2017). The intricacies of language and identity offer a rich backdrop for the study of language attitudes, which in turn are unavoidably linked to language policy (Lasagabaster, 2017).

The Flemish identity is rooted in its historic fight for more independence, and full linguistic freedom for the Dutch-speaking community of Flanders, from a francophone national leadership. Guido Gezelle (1860), a Flemish poet and writer who was a prominent figure in the Flemish Movement during the 19$^{th}$ century, references the Flemish identity, language and culture in one of his poems with the line 'The Fleming renounces his language and culture; he may not!'. Although the Flemings still are the majority in numbers, the Flemish identity and language have historically undergone the same plight as other minority communities have experienced. Hence, language has always been and remains a key player in Belgian and Flemish politics (Mettewie & Janssens, 2006).

Contemporary Belgium is characterised by its multilingualism, and by political tensions between the language communities that carry an echo into Flemish classrooms where students learn French and English as foreign languages (De Valck, 2007).

English is the most researched language in field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and French remains one of most studied foreign languages in the UK and in many other countries (De Waele, 2005b). Yet, the Flemish context has remained largely unexplored in the field of L2 attitudes. Hence, the present study aims to investigate the nature of the language attitudes held by Flemish secondary school students learning French and English, as well as the influence of various variables such as age and gender, and the relation with cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency. The research topic was motivated by the little research that has been conducted in contexts with more than two

languages, and especially in the Flemish context focussing on French and English as second languages (Lasagabaster, 2003 as cited in Lasagabaster, 2005; Dewaele, 2005a). This dissertation was underpinned by the few, yet pivotal, existing studies with Flemish students by Mettewie (2004), Dewaele (2005a), Mettewie and Janssens (2006), and De Valck (2007). Dewaele (2005a) was the main study of reference as it was the only study that investigated Flemish secondary school students' attitudes towards French and English. Furthermore, the researcher's own professional experience teaching Dutch, French and English to Flemish students prompted a research interest in students' attitudes towards foreign languages.

A mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis was applied in this study in order to investigate the attitudes of Flemish students towards French and English, the influence of various variables, and the relation with cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency. Quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire and analysed through tests of difference and association. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and then analysed thematically.

This dissertation is organised as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature that inspired the research questions that this study sought to answer. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, and Chapter 4 reports on the quantitative and qualitative findings of the data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the results, aiming to provide answers to the research questions and tentative interpretations of the findings. Chapter 6 contains the conclusion of this dissertation.

# 2 Literature Review

The present study aims to explore the relation between Flemish students' language attitudes, cultural identity, and self-rated L2 proficiency. This chapter will first review the existing literature that addresses conceptualizations and operationalizations of language attitudes, and previous findings regarding the relation between language attitudes and various other variables, both in general and in the Flemish context. The existing research into the relationship between cultural identity, language attitudes, and self-rated L2 proficiency will be explored next. The final sections of this chapter outlines the aim of this study, and the research questions and hypotheses.

## 2.1 Language attitudes

Previous research agrees that language attitudes, or attitudes towards a target language, play a key role in second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2011; Gardner, 1985). SLA research interest in language attitudes was driven by Gardner and Lambert's (e.g. 1972) early work that incorporated attitudes into frameworks of language learning motivation. Gardner (1985) suggested that L2 learners with more positive attitudes toward a target language and its speakers and culture were more successful than learners with more negative attitudes. Dewaele (2002, p. 26) agrees with this position and speculates that "prejudiced attitudes might demotivate L2 learners." However, the occasional overlapping of 'attitudes' with closely related ideas such as 'motivation' has led to confusion (Bartram, 2010). Thus, a clear conceptualization of 'language attitudes' is necessary for a successful operationalization of this variable in studies on the subject.

Despite the large amount of research on the topic, scholars in the field have yet to agree on a single definition of the term 'language attitudes.' Definitions include "an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or referent" by Gardner (1985, p. 9) or "an evaluative orientation to a social object of some sort" by Garrett (2010, p. 20). Tucker (2018) defined the term, based on work by Dragojevic (2017), as "an individual's or group's beliefs, perceptions and evaluation of a language or linguistic variety." The present study will adapt Tucker's (2018) definition to include attitudes towards language-related entities, such as multilingualism, as suggested by Artamonova (2020). Hence, the term 'language attitudes' has been conceptualized in the present dissertation as the evaluation, beliefs, and perceptions that an individual or group hold of a language or language-related entity.

The bulk of research agrees that attitudes consist of three elements, namely, a cognitive component which deals with one's beliefs, an affective component which deals with one's feelings, and a behavioural component which deals with one's actions (e.g. Eagly & Chaiken, 2007; Garrett, et al., 2003; Haddock & Huskinson, 2004; Triandis, 1971). Although this tripartite model has been widely accepted (Garrett et al., 2003), previous findings have revealed that a possible conflict can arise between the affective and the other two components, such as when one holds positive views on a language, but more negative attitudes towards its use or acquisition (Lasagabaster, 2017).

Attitudes are believed to be learned, and even though they are relatively stable, language attitudes are generally thought not to be permanent, as they can change with experience (Ajzen & Cote, 2008; Gardner, 1985; Hawkey, 2018; Triandis, 1971. The majority of studies on language attitudes indicate a complex relationship between both individual and societal variables (Dewaele, 2005a). The literature on language attitudes distinguishes three main approaches to measuring language attitudes, namely: content analysis; indirect measures, such as speaker evaluation studies, which examine implicit or covert attitudes; and direct measures, which investigate explicit or overt attitudes with self-report questionnaires and interviews (Al-Hoorie, 2016; Garrett, 2010; Giles & Billings, 2004; Knops & Van Hout, 2011). L2 attitudes have been proven to be influenced by various sociocultural and didactic factors. The next paragraphs will discuss studies that have explored the influence of those factors on language attitudes.

### 2.1.1 Age

Although age has also received considerable research attention in applied linguistics, there has been little systematic examination that focusses on age as a variable that interacts with language attitudes (Sicam & Lucas, 2016). Buschenhofen (1998) investigated Papua New Guinean secondary school students' language attitudes and his findings suggest that, although specific English language contexts influence attitudinal differences to some extent, younger and more mature English language learners generally hold favourable attitudes. Lasagabaster (2005) conducted a study with undergraduate students in the Basque country and his findings showed an effect of age on their attitudes towards Basque, Spanish and English, with younger students (aged 17-19) showing the most favourable attitudes towards the minority language (Basque). Kormos and Csizér (2008) found that, when comparing secondary school students, university students and adult learners, the youngest group indicated that culture linked to the target language (English) was their main motivational factor, whereas the older groups' motivation was largely influenced by the language's international status.

Additionally, Peçenek (2011) suggests that age, exposure, cultural-linguistic environment, and parental attitudes have significant effects on second language acquisition. Although some of the studies cited in this review have been conducted in different context from the present study's Flemish multilingual context, the findings do shed light on the effect of age on language attitudes across contexts. However, the existing studies on age use many different conceptualizations and looked at different ages. A meta-analysis by Masgoret and Gardner (2003) into the role of motivation and language attitudes in L2 learning found no clear moderating effect of age. Although this meta-analysis examined 75 independent samples involving over 10,000 participants, it only examined studies that were conducted by Gardner and his colleagues, and that used the Attitude/Motivation Test battery. Thus, further research that addresses age as a dependent variable that could affect language attitudes is required.

### 2.1.2 Gender

Previous research has also found differences in language attitudes in respect of gender. Lasagabaster (2005) investigated the effect of gender on students' attitudes towards English and found that female students are more likely to display positive attitudes towards a target language. Early research by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Spolsky (1989) also suggests that girls have more positive attitudes towards French as a second language in Canada and Hebrew in Israel, respectively, compared to boys. Baker and MacIntyre (2000) found gender to be correlated with attitudes towards French of Anglo-Canadian students in non-immersion education, but not with attitudes of immersion students. Dewaele's (2005a) research with Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English as second languages has revealed that female students display significantly more favourable views towards French than their male counterparts, but no difference was detected for English. Sicam and Lucas' (2016) research with Filipino students also found that female students have significantly more favourable attitudes towards English as a second language than their male peers. Although this study has been conducted in a different context from that of the present study, it does offer an indication that attitudes towards both first and second languages, or towards foreign languages interact with gender. Even though a long line of research has looked into the effect of gender on language attitudes and motivation, Dörnyei and Clément (2001) remark that there has not been enough systematic gender-specific research, which Dewaele (2005a) attributes to the lack of generalisable findings due to small sample sizes.

### 2.1.3 Socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic status (SES), sometimes referred to as social class, is another factor that has been found in some studies to correlate with language attitudes. Heng and Caleon (2008), who measured SES based on five indications such as household income, housing type, and parents' education level and occupation, found that Singaporean children of a lower socio-economic status have more favourable views towards the three languages spoken in the country than children from a middle and higher socio-economic class. Sicam and Lucas (2006) also found SES to correlate with Filipino students' positive attitudes towards English. However, other cases have indicated that there is no significant effect of SES on attitudes. Mettewie and Janssens (2006), for example, found that SES had a significant result for students' attitudes towards their L1, with the middle class showing more positive attitudes than the lower class, but they found no significant effects on attitudes to L2. However, the researchers switch between the terms 'SES' and 'class' without clarifying how they measured this construct. Ladegaard (2000) found no effect of class, based on parents' education and occupation, on Danish adolescents' language attitudes. Dewaele's (2005a) study with Flemish students also revealed no significant link between attitudes and social class, measured with the highest level of education that the students' parents attained.

### 2.1.4 Classification and self-identification as monolingual or bilingual

First language or languages have been shown to shape attitudes towards other foreign languages. Lasagabaster (2001) conducted a study with 133 university students in the Basque Country who had Basque, Spanish, and Basque and Spanish as their native languages. The findings suggested that the mother tongue not only influenced the attitudes towards the region's official languages, Basque and Spanish, but also towards English, the foreign language. Although the researcher included three groups, namely, mainly Spanish, mainly Basque and bilingual for attitudes towards Basque and Spanish, only two groups were included for attitudes towards English, namely, Spanish L1 or Basque L1. Thus, it would be interesting to find if student's classification as monolingual or bilingual would influence the attitudes towards foreign languages. This dissertation makes the distinction between classification as monolingual or multilingual, in which case the researcher operationalizes monolingualism or multilingualism as the participant's first language or languages, or the home language, compared to self-identification as monolingual or bilingual, in which the researcher takes into account the participant's perspective of whether they consider themselves fluent in more than one language. Mettewie and Janssens (2006), for example, which will be discussed later in this

literature review, classed students as monolingual or bilingual based on the language they use to communicate with their parents. Rather than classing students into groups based on the languages they speak at home or in school, Danzaka (2011) asked students whether they consider themselves bilingual English-Spanish or monolingual. Her study with six learners of English as an Additional Language suggests that self-identification as monolingual or multilingual interacts with a learner's attitude towards language learning. The researcher considered the participants' perspective of bilingualism, which was conceptualized as having a certain threshold level of (oral) proficiency in English and Spanish, as well as confidence in both languages. Though the small sample size in this study precludes generalization of the findings, the study offers an insight into how identifying as monolingual or bilingual interacts with how students evaluate a language. However, it could have been useful if the researchers had included a deeper discussion on how participants' self-identification as monolingual or bilingual shaped their attitudes towards language learning. Nevertheless, these studies suggest that the native language or languages, i.e. participants' classification or self-identification as monolingual or multilingual, play a role in shaping language attitudes.

### 2.1.5 Self-perceived L2 competence, and knowledge of a language outside the curriculum

Lasagabaster (2005) examined university students' attitudes towards Basque, Spanish, and English to determine which variables were the most influential. He found that students who had knowledge of a language that was not included in the Basque curriculum (i.e. Basque, Spanish, and English) had more positive attitudes towards English compared to students whose knowledge was limited to the three aforementioned languages. Furthermore, the students who rated their English competence level as 'good' or 'very good' held significantly more favourable views towards English than those who had little to no knowledge of the language. These findings coincide with Mettewie and Janssens' (2006) findings as well as Dewaele's (2005a) results which showed that self-perceived competence in French and English influenced Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English respectively, with those rating their competence higher displaying more positive attitudes. These studies seem to imply knowledge of a foreign language that is not included in the curriculum, as well as self-perceived competence level interact with students' attitudes towards a foreign language.

### 2.1.6 Language exposure or contact

Research by Mettewie and Janssens (2006) suggests that engaging with a language outside of school, i.e. visiting an English-speaking country or watching content in English,

correlates with a more positive attitude towards English. The authors remark that it is nevertheless hard to determine if the positive attitudes lead to the engagement or vice versa. Côté and Mettewie (2008) also observed a relation between the amount of language contact (in and outside of school) and more positive attitudes towards the language and its linguistic community. These last two studies were conducted in the Flemish context, which is one that offers an interesting linguistic landscape for language attitudes research. These studies are particularly interesting as the context matches that of the present study, which has been conducted in Flemish schools. The next section will explain the Flemish multilingual context so as to discuss some of the research into language attitudes that has been conducted in Flanders in more depth.

## 2.2 Language attitudes in multilingual contexts: exploring the Flemish context

The next parts will outline Flanders' linguistic and cultural background and review some of the language attitudes research that has been conducted in the Flemish context.

### 2.2.1 Flanders' linguistic and cultural history

Flanders' linguistic history, with Dutch and French as the key linguistic players, has been a turbulent one (Dewaele, 2000; Willems, 1997). French was the sole official language when the Kingdom of Belgium was born in 1830, and even though more than half the population did not master the language, they were nonetheless governed in it (Geerts, 2011). The rising need to establish an identity that was independent from Holland gave way to the use of French as the language of prestige and formality. Wils (1985 as cited in Geerts, 2011) posited that the entire population established a Belgian national identity that moved the country forwards both culturally and economically. However, Geerts (2011) remarks that, despite the Kingdom's insistence on a national identity ideology, the Flemish people embarked on a social movement in search of a social identity of their own from the second half of the 19$^{th}$ century, to improve their less-than-favourable status and fuelled by the discovery and development of the Flemish people's history and literature. This transformed the Belgian identity movement into a Flemish one in the northern region of the kingdom (Wils 1985 as cited in Geerts, 2011).

Though the movement was born as a cultural one, leaving the dominant political powers initially unaffected and thus not concerned, Geerts (2011) explains that the Flemish identity that was gaining momentum also looked towards the political imbalance, seeking to abolish the privileges of the dominant French-speaking class and establishing their

own rights with full linguistic freedom, leading to Belgium becoming a bilingual state in the final decade of the 19th century. Still, the early linguistic legislation remained more concessionary than obligatory in nature, making it easy to avoid. The Flemish emancipation movement, demanding more rights including linguistic recognition, continued until well into the 20th century, illustrated with the University of Ghent and the Catholic University of Louvain only becoming autonomous Flemish institutions in 1929 and 1968 respectively (Geerts, 2011; Witte & Van Velthoven, 1998).

Today, Belgian politics is still dominated by the tensions between the French- and Dutch-speaking communities (De Valck, 2007). The search for a Flemish identity and more autonomy for the region is ongoing. Dewaele (2005a) argues that speaking French in Flanders was and still is considered a sign of disdain for Dutch. The Flemish region's main medium of instruction in education is the Flemish variety of Dutch, with French being introduced as the first foreign language and English as the second foreign language (Dewaele, 2005a). Though English enjoys a relatively uncomplicated position as a second language in Flanders, possibly linked to the United Kingdom being Belgium's only neighbour that has not occupied the country according to Francard (2001), the precarious position of French is inextricably linked to its political and sociocultural legacy in Flanders.

### 2.2.2 Language attitudes research in Flanders

Despite Flanders' rich linguistic history and present situation, the Flemish context has been the subject of few studies (Dewaele, 2005a). Much of the existing research focuses on language attitudes towards the two of nation's official languages, Dutch and French, though some include English as the third language. The research gives insight into the tensions, and the unfavourable attitudes that pupils hold of the 'other' linguistic community and their language. Findings from studies in Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels (e.g. Dewaele, 2005a; Housen et al., 2000; Lochtman et al., 2004; Mettewie, 2004) reveal that secondary school students have relatively favourable attitudes towards English, but not towards the language of the 'other' region, Dutch or French respectively. Their attitudes towards the second language are less favourable or even negative compared to their attitudes towards English. The studies seem to align with the stereotypical pessimistic view that pupils have of the nation's other language and its community. This section will critically discuss four pivotal studies that have been conducted with Flemish students.

#### *2.2.2.1. Mettewie (2004)*

Mettewie (2004) researched the interaction of numerous variables with the language attitudes of monolingual and bilingual (Dutch- and/or French-speaking) students. The language attitudes dimension in her study consisted of attitudes towards language, language community, culture, Belgium, bilingualism, and foreign language. She found that linguistic background (monolingual or bilingual upbringing and education) explained most of the variance in participants' language attitudes, whereas variables such as age and gender had only a marginal, though still significant, effect. Furthermore, students' language proficiency, both self-rated and objectively measured, showed a strong positive correlation with their language attitudes, especially towards their second language.

Mettewie's (2004) results also showed that students' native language interacts with their attitudes towards bilingualism, with French-speaking students in Brussels being significantly less positive towards bilingualism than their Dutch-speaking peers. However, she found no significant difference between bilinguals and monolinguals in their attitudes towards bilingualism. Furthermore, her findings indicated that Dutch-speaking students in Flanders and Brussels who identify strongly with Flemish culture have more positive attitudes towards bilingualism and language learning. However, their attitudes towards French classes are not very favourable. Nevertheless, they perceive French to be a beautiful and useful language that is nonetheless hard to learn.

Mettewie's (2004) study offers interesting insights, as it brings together, in the same study and with the same sample, numerous variables that are of interest in language attitudes research. However, she investigated French and Dutch as the L1 or L2 in this study and did not study English as a foreign language. Furthermore, the 'monolingual or bilingual' variable was based solely on the inclusion of Dutch and/or French as their home language. Students that were bilingual with other language combinations were classed as monolingual for ease of comparison. However, this classification is problematic as it neglects other (e.g. heritage) language that participants may speak, and thus might downplay the true extent of multilingualism in the sample.

*2.2.2.2 Dewaele (2005)*

Other studies which have explored Flemish students' language attitudes, include Dewaele (2005a) who investigated 100 Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English. He found that students had more positive attitudes towards English than French, even though French is studied longer than English in formal education. Dewaele also found a weak positive correlation between the attitudes towards both languages. However, he gives no interpretation or possible explanation for this result. The researcher also

investigated the relation between cultural identity and language attitudes, which will be further discussed in section 2.3.1.

*2.2.2.3 Mettewie and Janssens (2006)*

Mettewie and Janssens (2006) looked into the bilingual context of Brussels with a sample that consisted of 239 undergraduate students that attended either a French-medium or a Dutch-medium higher education institution in Brussels. About half of the sample was French L1 and Dutch L2, and vice versa for the other half. English was examined as a foreign language of both groups in the study. Their results show that the students' language community (i.e. French L1 or Dutch L1) influenced their language attitudes. The Dutch-speaking students from Flanders had more favourable attitudes towards their L1 and L2 than the French-speaking students from Wallonia and Brussels. Although both French-speaking and Dutch-speaking students showed more positive attitudes towards English than towards their L2, Dutch and French respectively, the gap between the attitudes towards English and the L2 was bigger for the French-speaking group. Dutch-speaking students displayed neutral attitudes towards French whereas French-speaking students displayed negative attitudes towards Dutch. However, the researchers operationalized monolingualism and multilingualism as the language students use to communicate with parents, with might have influenced results, as this does not include languages students use to communicate with other family members (e.g. grandparents) or in other contexts.

*2.2.2.4 De Valck (2007)*

De Valck (2007) studied the language attitudes of bilingual secondary school students in a small town situated in the bilingual region around Brussels, a region of Belgium in which the French-Flemish language conflict is prominent. The bilingual students' attitudes towards Dutch, French, the French-speaking community and the Dutch-speaking community were compared to the attitudes of their monolingual (Dutch) peers. The findings seem to indicate that bilinguals have more favourable attitudes towards the French-speaking community and French than towards Dutch and its community, but their attitudes towards the latter were not negative. The monolingual Dutch group also revealed positive attitudes towards French, though not as positive as those of the bilingual respondents. However, their attitudes towards the French-speaking community were negative. The author suggests that the monolingual Dutch students perceive the tension between the Dutch and French-speaking community as a conflict, which is manifested in their language attitudes. However, De Valck (2007) did not include a

qualitative component which could have allowed a closer examination of how, or indeed whether, students express their thoughts about the language conflict when constructing or reflecting on their language attitudes. Yet, as the literature discussed in this section seems to imply, it can be tentatively argued that students' cultural identity plays a role in the formation of language attitudes. The next section will evaluate some of the studies that have looked at the intersection of language attitudes and identity.

## 2.3 Research into the relationship between language attitudes, cultural identity, and self-rated L2 proficiency

Claes and Gerritsen (2011) define culture as the collective behaviours that distinguish one group of people from another. Culture, which is passed on from generation to generation, is a complex and multi-faceted entity which consists of symbols such as values, art and language which is one of the most salient features of a culture (Giles & Coupland, 1991). According to Lee (2002), cultural identity is shaped by one's awareness of one's own culture as well as a recognition of one's social group. The authors explains that cultural identity is an umbrella term that consists of multiple factors, namely, linguistic, regional or geographic, religious, and ethnic or racial factors. However, the absence of a factor does not automatically lead an individual to lose a cultural identity, and the possession of one or more of these factors does not necessarily lead to possession of a cultural identity. Cultural identity is, like language attitudes, very much subjective. Henning-Lindblom and Liebkind (2007) argue that learners can have multiple identities at the same time, making them able to acquire a new identity, e.g. one that is linked to a target language, without diminishing their existing identity. Previous research has indicated that a learner's perception of their cultural identity shapes their language attitudes (e.g. Lai, 2011; Gatbonton & Trofimovich, 2008; Hojat et al., 2010). This section will discuss some studies that have investigated the relationship between cultural identity, language attitudes, and self-rated L2 proficiency.

### 2.3.1 Cultural identity and language attitudes

Various studies have investigated the relationship between cultural identity and language attitudes, though the research in the field is limited. Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006) found that a stronger identification with the TL speech community correlated with a more positive attitude towards the language. Dewaele (2005a) investigated the relationship between Flemish students' identities (political and cultural) and their attitudes towards English and French as foreign languages. He found that students who identified as Flemish first, and then as Belgian had less favourable attitudes towards French than

students who identified as Belgian before Flemish, whereas there was no significant difference for their attitudes towards English. Moreover, both groups had more positive attitudes towards English than towards French. Dewaele argues this difference is linked to Flanders' tense history with French. Although Dewaele's research provided interesting insights into the correlation between language attitudes and identity in Flanders, his measure of ethnic identity is only binary (Flemish-Belgian or Belgian-Flemish), and thus does not capture the full range of possible identities that students might have.

Lai (2011) explored the relation between Hong Kong students' language attitudes and their cultural identities, and distinguished three identities: Hongkonger, HK-Chinese, and Chinese. The researcher found that the majority of students said they identified as Hongkonger or HK-Chinese, implying that Hong Kong's local identity is stronger than its national identity. Although the groups did not differ significantly in their attitudes towards English (the colonizer's language) or Cantonese (the local language), their attitudes did diverge significantly in respect of Mandarin-Chinese (the national language). The Chinese and HK-Chinese groups' attitudes towards the national language were more favourable compared to the Hongkonger group, though the latter's attitudes towards Mandarin-Chinese was still positive. The author explains that the Hongkonger group view the national language as one that is merely used for communication without any symbolic meanings, as it is not required for studies and there is no urgent need to use it. Lai (2011) links these findings to the ongoing process of identity construction, in which multilingualism and multiple identities are formed in an ongoing process. This aligns with Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind's (2007) stance on multiple identities. Contrary to Dewaele's (2005a) study, Lai (2011) included a local-national identity, as well as an only local and only national identity.

Hansen Edwards' (2015) study builds on Lai's (2011) and investigates the correlation between Hong Kong students' cultural identity, self-reported language and language attitudes towards Hong Kong English (HKE). The results show that the attitudes of students who identify as Hongkonger and/or speak HKE are more favourable towards the language. Though the studies in this section also investigated the influence of other variables, such as gender, they do provide evidence for the relationship between cultural identity and language attitudes.

### 2.3.2 Cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency

Existing research reveals that learners with a stronger sense of their own cultural identity are more likely to rate their proficiency at a lower level, and score lower on measures of L2 proficiency (Gatbonton & Trofimovich, 2008; Trofimovich et al., 2013). However, the

interaction between identity and language learning has also indicated positive L2 learning outcomes, as some studies suggest that a stronger identification the L1 group is related to a higher L2 proficiency (Coupland et al., 2005, Ellinger, 2000). Noels et al. (1996) explored the effect of cultural identity on self-rated L2 proficiency with Chinese students in Canada, and found that students who identified as Canadian are more likely to have higher self-confidence in English, and those with a stronger Chinese identity tended to have lower self-confidence in English. Although these studies' contexts differ from the Flemish context, it does seem to suggest that identity influences self-rated L2 proficiency.

### 2.4 Aim of this study

Much of the research on language attitudes in Belgium has been conducted in Brussels, though some with Flemish students. Thus, carrying out a study in a fully Flemish context would provide useful insights into present-day Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English, about fifteen years after Dewaele's (2005a) study. This research builds on Dewaele's and expands on it by including cultural identity as a variable with multiple identity combinations, previously illustrated by Lai (2011, as mentioned in section 2.3). A conscious choice was made not to include attitudes towards target language speakers, contrary to Dewaele (2005a) and Artamonova (2020), as this would have raised the question of which speaker community would be included for French, in particular, but also for English. This layer of complexity did not need to be included, as it was not related to the research questions, which mainly sought to map out the present language attitudes of Flemish secondary students aged 16 and older towards French and English as foreign languages.

Moreover, Belgium education has no national or regional exams so there are no standardized scores that could be used as a more objective measure, and time and resource constraints prevented the researcher from adding a self-developed tool to measure proficiency in this study. Nevertheless, this study is the first to investigate Flemish students' attitudes towards multilingualism, language learning as well as French and English, with the latter being linked to a range of variables, in relation with their cultural identity. Furthermore, a decision was made to measure the relationship between cultural identity as well as with self-rated L2 proficiency, as the latter has had little to no exploration in existing research in the field. Hence, these gaps in the existing research motivate the present study, which will be described in the following sections.

## 2.5 Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions this research project aims to answer are as follows.

- RQ1: What are monolingual and multilingual Flemish students' attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning?
- RQ2: What are Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English
    - Do Flemish students differ based on (a) classification or (b) self-identification monolingual or bilingual, (c) gender, (d) age, (e) SES, (f) self-perceived competence, (g) language contact or exposure, and (h) knowledge of a language outside the curriculum?
- RQ3: What is the relation between students' cultural identity, their language attitudes, and their self-rated proficiency for French and English?

Based on the findings discussed in the literature review, the following hypotheses will be tested.

- HP1: Students who self-identify as monolingual differ from their multilingual counterparts in their attitudes towards language learning.
- HP2: Flemish students' attitudes towards English are more positive than their attitudes towards French.
- HP3: Students who are classed as monolingual differ from their multilingual peers in their attitudes towards foreign languages.
- HP4: Students who have knowledge of a language outside the curriculum have more positive attitudes towards the L2.
- HP5: Students who rate their proficiency in an L2 higher will have more favourable attitudes towards the L2.
- HP6: Flemish female students have more positive attitudes towards French, but not towards English, compared to Flemish male students.
- HP7: Students with a higher SES have more favourable views of French and English than students with a lower SES.
- HP8: Younger students have more positive views of French and English compared to older students.

# 3 Research Methodology

The subsequent sections will discuss the research design, data collection instruments, sampling, participants, variables and sample distribution, and ethical considerations.

## 3.1 Research design

The research questions were investigated and answered through a mixed methods approach, with the aim of combining the most suitable and rigorous research methods (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2010). Dörnyei (2007) describes mixed methods approaches as designs in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected, analysed, and integrated in a single study. This study aims to research overt language attitudes towards English and French as second languages, as well as self-rated L2 proficiency, and cultural identity of Flemish pupils. Garret et al. (2003, p. 26) acknowledge that quantitative work has likely contributed more to the knowledge on language attitudes than scholars may recognise. Nevertheless, they argue that questionnaires, which are more suited to quantitative data analysis, could also provide useful qualitative data through open-ended questions. Hawkey (2018) argues that while the bulk of research on language attitudes is quantitative, qualitative data offer complementary insights. Blommaert (2013) concurs and calls for the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced data analysis. Although scholars point towards natural talk or text as a source of authenticity, the bulk of qualitative empirical insights are gained through interviews (Weiyun He, 2001; Peräkylä, 2005), as they provide the researcher with a tool to analyse subjective participants' experiences with more control (Peräkylä, 2005).

For this study, the complementary combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was achieved through a questionnaire investigating language attitudes, proficiency and cultural identity, and which consisted of mainly close-ended questions, as well as semi-structured follow-up interviews. The questionnaire assessed the influence of demographic and linguistic background variables, cultural identity, and self-rated L2 proficiency (independent variables) on attitudes towards multilingualism and towards English and French as second languages (dependent variables) in Flemish secondary education. This study used an explanatory sequential design, in which data is collected for quantitative analysis in the first phase, followed up by a qualitative component to further examine the sample (Hashemi & Babaii, 2013).

The questionnaire was first piloted on five individuals who were not included in the sample but did meet the inclusion criteria. They were five secondary school pupils in Flanders aged 16 and older who completed the questionnaire to provide feedback on language, length, clarity, appropriateness and any other aspects they wished to comment on. The participants provided useful comments on the question type for multiple-choice questions. The question type was changed from a drop-down menu to a bullet point list, in which participants can tick the preferred answer. Three participants found the question on cultural identity not sufficiently clear. Thus, a short definition describing cultural identity was added to the question as a subtitle, to improve participant comprehension.

Participants completed the questionnaire online, via Google forms. Collecting the quantitative data online through a questionnaire allowed the researcher to reach participants in Flanders, as travel to schools was largely impossible due to COVID restrictions. Although the researcher was unable to control the conditions in which the participants completed the questions, or to offer added in-person support or explanations, the participants were able to complete the questionnaire at a time which suited them and on any digital device of their choice with access to the internet. The questionnaire link was sent to the headteacher upon completion of their consent forms and only after a period during which parents could opt-out of the research. The headteacher sent the questionnaire link to students via their school email.

After the questionnaire responses were collected, the responses were briefly reviewed, and invitations were emailed to participants who expressed an interest in taking part in a follow-up interview in the last section of the questionnaire. Four participants replied to the invitation, and after participant and parental consent was granted, the interviews were carried out online via Jitsi meet, in a password-protected meeting room that the participant could enter anonymously, in August. Participants selected a time that suited them best and each interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, the medium of instruction in Flemish education. At the end of each interview, participants were given the chance to ask questions or provide comments or feedback.

## 3.2 Data collection instruments

The materials used in this study were a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The data collection instruments will be discussed in the next sections.

### 3.2.1 Questionnaire

Participants in this study completed a questionnaire (see appendix A) in Dutch which consisted of items that were organised into four main parts: background, language proficiency, cultural identity, and language attitudes.

The background section asked for demographic information (e.g. age, gender, school) as well as linguistic background (e.g. native language, home language). The section on language proficiency asked the respondents about their language learning background (e.g. how many hours of English/French they have in school, when they started learning the languages). Respondents also had to self-rate their proficiency from A1 to C2, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). A short description was added for each of the levels, so the respondents could choose the option that best matched their proficiency based on the descriptions. Finally, respondents had to rate their skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) in both languages on a 5-point Likert scale.

The items on cultural identity were based on Dewaele's (2005a) research on language attitudes of Flemish secondary school students. In his study, he included politico-cultural identity as an independent variable. It was measured using the following statement: 'I define myself as a Belgian more than as a Fleming'. Participants indicated whether they considered the statement true or false. This was used as a starting point and was expanded on in the present study. Participants were asked to choose, from a list of five options that included Flemish and/or Belgian labels, which 'cultural identity' best matched their own, or had the opportunity to express an alternative response in the 'other' option.

The language attitudes items were adapted from Artamonova's (2020) original version of the Language Attitudes Questionnaire for Language Learners (LAQ-LL). The instrument first consisted of 43 items categorized into five dimensions: attitudes towards multilingualism, attitudes towards language learning (in general), attitudes towards a specific language, attitudes towards language classes, and attitudes towards the language group and target language cultures. The items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'Strongly disagree' to 7 'Strongly agree'. The final attitudinal area in Artamonova's (2020) original questionnaire was excluded for the present study, and the items towards a specific language and towards language classes were included for both English and for French. A total of 50 items were included for this part of the questionnaire. A limitation of this instrument is that it is the version of the questionnaire that Artamonova (2020) used as the starting instrument to develop the new LAQ-LL. She reviewed the original questionnaire into a new validated and reliable instrument

consisting of 28 items divided over three subscales: language learning experience, sociocultural appeal, and value of multilingualism. However, a decision was made for this study to adapt the original questionnaire rather than the new, validated questionnaire, as the dimensions and items in the former better matched the purpose of the present study, which aims to look at the language attitudes towards English and French specifically in a school context, with the purpose of comparing the two languages. The new questionnaire was not appropriate as about half of the items in the new questionnaire were related to attitudes towards L2 cultures or speakers, which did not fit the present study's aims.

#### 3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of four pupils. This type of interview allows the researcher to ask a set of pre-determined questions (see appendix B) and leaves space for interviewees to elaborate and comment during the interview (Dörnyei, 2007). The purpose of this qualitative component was to explore the respondents' answers in more depth. It is an expansion on Dewaele's (2005a) participant comments section in which he briefly discussed what students' thoughts were on the subjects that were included in the questionnaire. The pre-set questions were focussed on their language attitudes, their cultural identity and their self-perceived proficiency. The researcher conducted the interviews online in Dutch. The interview data was analysed using a thematic qualitative content analysis (Sharifian et al., 2021). The audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim, during which the participants were assigned pseudonyms, and then coded in order to construct a thematic framework for data analysis. Codifying the interview data partially followed an approach set out by Sharifian et al. (2021), in which the interview data was first analysed for answers to the research questions as well as any theoretical concepts that were discussed in the literature. Finally, ideas were organized into themes that were identified by the researcher.

## 3.3 Sampling

Convenience sampling methods were employed to recruit participants who met the inclusion criteria of being a pupil aged 16 or above in Flemish secondary education. The researcher had originally planned to conduct the research in Morocco, but due to the lack of schools willing to participate (influenced by the Covid situation), the focus of the present study was shifted to the multilingual Belgian context. The researcher recruited four schools in Flanders who sent the questionnaire link to pupils in the final two years of secondary school. This approach was chosen as headteacher consent was an additional

step in the ethical procedure. Furthermore, it gave the researcher greater control, as the questionnaire link was sent only to pupils who met the inclusion criteria.

### 3.4 Participants and setting

Recent studies on language attitudes have shown politico-cultural orientation (Dewaele, 2005a) to correlate with Flemish L2 learners' language attitudes. His participants were recruited in one single school in Flanders. The target population of the present study consists of secondary school students in Flanders aged 16 and older. The initial study sample consisted of 79 participants between the ages of 16 and 20 who were attending school in Flanders. The students were recruited from four schools in Flanders (table 1). Upon data analysis, one participant was excluded as they indicated that they were a university student. Another student was excluded as they indicated they had never had French classes in school, as well as two students who had not had any French that school year. One final student was excluded as they had ticked the highest score for every item in the attitudes section, which indicated lack of validity of their answers as their responses were contradictory. Therefore, the responses of 74 participants were included in the final sample for the questionnaire data analysis. The follow-up interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of four students, one student from each school.

| **School** | **Participants** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Questionnaire** | **Interviews** |
| **Koninklijk Atheneum Geel** | 9 | 1 |
| **Campus Het Spoor Mol** | 13 | 1 |
| **Sint Dimpna College Geel** | 29 | 1 |
| **Sint-Franciscus College Heusden-Zolder** | 23 | 1 |
| **Total** | **74** | **4** |

Table 1 Schools and participants in the sample

## 3.5 Variables and operationalization

To form an idea of the variables in this study, the next section will present the operationalization of the variables that were used to run the statistical tests. The variables have been organized into four groups, partially based on Mettewie's (2004) sample description, namely, core variables, attitudinal variables, language proficiency variables, and the cultural identity variable. The variables will be described in the next sections.

### 3.5.1 Core variables

Eight core variables were distinguished based on the literature: gender, age, SES, classification as monolingual or multilingual, self-identification as monolingual or multilingual, self-perceived competence, knowledge of a language outside the curriculum, and contact or exposure outside of school. These variables were used to test hypotheses with attitudinal variables. The description and operationalization of each of these variables will be presented in table 2.

| **Variable** | **Operationalization** |
|---|---|
| **age** | The participant filled out their age in the questionnaire. |
| **gender** | The participant could choose from male, female, non-binary or other and specify their gender. |
| **SES** | This variable was operationalized using the MacArthur scale of subjective social status (Giatti et al., 2012). The scale consists of a ladder with ten steps which is a pictorial representation of society, with the people who have the highest social status and are the most well-off at the top. The reliability of this instrument was tested by Giatti et al. (2012) who found the ladder to have good stability between the test and retest. The limitation of this tool is that it is not based on an objective measure, such as income. However, the pilot test of the questionnaire showed that students are sometimes unaware of their household income, and even of what their parents' education and occupation is. Therefore, the MacArthur scale of subjective social status was introduced so that |

| | |
|---|---|
| | students' perspective of their status in society could be used as a reference point.<br><br>The students were asked to indicate which step best matches their family's social status. The researcher's initial intention was to compare the sample based on the ten steps. However, the results show that about 90% of the sample was situated between steps 5 and 8. The remaining 10% was situated on steps 1 to 4, and 9 and 10, with some steps only having one participants. Therefore, the decision was made to turn this variable into a binary one, for ease of comparison, so that a t-test could be used. Even though this removes some of the nuances that the ladder may have captured, this also removes any possible uncertainty of unequal and small sample sizes with an ANOVA. Thus, the results were categorized into two groups, namely, a lower socioeconomic status (steps one to five) and a higher socioeconomic status (steps six to ten). |
| **Classification as monolingual or multilingual** | This variable was operationalized as the first language(s) that students chose or added in the questionnaire. Students who chose more than one language were classified as multilingual. |
| **Self-identification as monolingual or multilingual** | This variable was operationalized as the language(s) in which students indicated they felt comfortable expressing themselves. Students who selected more than one language were classified as multilingual. This additional variable was introduced to acknowledge students who may only have one L1, but who identify as multilingual. One interviewee did an exchange in Ireland, and although she only had one L1 and home language, she considered herself multilingual. The limitation of this variable is that it is based on languages students are comfortable expressing themselves in, which still might not be sufficient to capture the nuances of multilingualism. |
| **Self-perceived language competence for French and** | The self-perceived competence variable consisted of one question that measured the overall proficiency for French and English, for which Dewaele (2005a) used a three-point Likert scale whereas this study uses the six levels of the Common European Framework of |

| | |
|---|---|
| **English** | Reference for language (CEFR), with a description so that students could make a more informed decision, and to pick up nuances in self-perceived general competence level. Although the researcher's original intention was to compare the six levels, similar to SES, the six categories of the CEFR were reduced to a tripartite classification of levels A, B or C. The groups had to be consolidated per two levels, as some of the answer options only had one respondent. |
| **Knowledge of a language outside the curriculum** | Students who had indicated a language outside of the curriculum (i.e. a language other than Dutch, English or French) in their responses to first language or language they are comfortable expressing themselves in, were put into one group and the rest of the sample formed the other group. |
| **Contact or exposure to French or English outside of school** | This variable was measured with the question 'have you participated in extra-curricular language activities?' for each of the languages. Students who replied yes were put into one group and the rest formed the other group. The researcher did not include a list of options, but rather provided the respondents with a 'specify' box if they answered 'yes'. Although not providing answer options to choose from (beyond 'yes') implies a loss of detail, the aim was for students to reflect on their own engagement with the L2 beyond the school walls, without the researcher providing a limited list of possible answers. |

Table 2 Variables and operationalization

### 3.5.2 Attitudinal variables

The language attitudes section of the questionnaire consisted of multiple subscales (dimensions), namely, attitudes towards multilingualism, attitudes towards language learning, attitudes towards French and English, and attitudes towards French and English classes. The participants scored each of the items on a seven-point Likert scale, and the reliability of each of the dimensions was tested. The researcher conducted a post-hoc item analysis so that the items that did not correlate with other items and the total scale score within each of the dimensions could be excluded from the data analysis. The multilingualism attitudes section achieved a high reliability score, Cronbach's alpha = .812, after deletion of three items and with five items remaining. The attitudes towards

language learning scale (four items) had a high reliability, Cronbach's alpha = .888, after deleting the items for which the item-total correlation was below the .3 threshold. The French attitudes subscale's (five items) reliability was high, Cronbach's alpha = .874, after omitting the items which did not reach the .3 threshold. The English attitudes subscale (four items) also achieved a high reliability, Cronbach's alpha = .852, after excluding the four items that did not load well. Finally, the attitudes towards French classes (six items) and English classes (five items) subscales reached a reliability of Cronbach's alpha = .894 and .915 respectively, though this dimension was excluded from the data analysis due to a sufficient number of results being provided by the other subscales. Thus, each of the subscales met the threshold of Cronbach's alpha = .6, as set out by Dörnyei (2007).

### 3.5.3 Cultural identity variable

The cultural identity variable was based on Dewaele (2005a) and Lai (2011) and consisted of a question in which students were asked to select or add the cultural identity label that best matched their own cultural identity. The options were: Flemish, Flemish-Belgian (Flemish first, then Belgian), Belgian-Flemish (Belgian first, then Flemish), Flemish-Belgian (both are equal), Belgian, and 'other', in which students could specific their own label.

### 3.5.4 Self-rated L2 proficiency

This study uses a subjective measure of language proficiency, namely, self-rated L2 proficiency for the four skills and for each of the two foreign languages in this study. Although the measure is subjective, the focus of this study consists of the relationship between mainly subjective variables such as identity and attitudes, in which case self-rated L2 proficiency fits the subjective nature of this study. The self-rated L2 proficiency measure was partially based on Mettewie (2004), who operationalized this using a self-rated measure of speaking competence. However, this study includes the four language skills for each of the foreign languages, and the choice to include all the skills was made so as to capture nuances of proficiency that might be perceived differently by participants based on the skill.

The five-point and seven-point Likert scales, for both self-rated proficiency and the attitudinal variables respectively, were treated as continuous variables as per Field (2009) who justifies this if each point on the scale represents equal differences in the property that is being measured, which was the case in the present study. Each response option was assigned a number, and items with 'prefer not to say' were considered

unanswered and were, therefore, treated as missing values in SPSS, so they would be excluded from the analysis. Finally, the scores for items linked to the same property that is being measured were averaged, thus creating one variable per dimension (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 105).

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). The collection, management and storage of the data were conducted following the University of Oxford's best practice guidance on research (University of Oxford, 2021). The researcher had informally contacted schools in their network to inquire if they were interested in participating in the research and upon receiving approval from CUREC (see appendix C), the schools were formally contacted (see appendix D). The researcher provided the schools with participant information sheets (see appendix E), consent forms for the headteacher (see appendix F) and opt-out forms for parents (see appendix G), all of which were translated into Dutch. The questionnaire link was sent to the school after the headteacher had returned the signed consent forms and after the opt-out period for parents. The questionnaire contained a consent section as a prelude, in which the data and information handling procedures were outlined. The participants had to provide their explicit consent before being able to access the questionnaire items. The respondents who expressed their interest in the follow-up interview were sent a participant information sheet which included a parental and participant consent form (see appendix H), which they had to complete before a date was agreed on for the interview.

The questionnaire data was processed in Google Forms and exported to Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The interviews were conducted on Jitsi meet and audio-recorded on the researcher's phone (with participants' and their parents'/guardians' explicit consent). The participants were given ID numbers to enter the meeting anonymously and the audio recordings on the researcher's phone were stored using the same ID number. All data is saved on the researcher's computer and backed up on the researcher's Nexus365 OneDrive account, both of which are password-protected. The researcher extracted contact details from the data set and stored them separately (in a separate folder) on their password-protected computer and Nexus365 OneDrive account, to preserve participants' anonymity.

# 4 Results

The data for the quantitative analysis in this study consists of closed items on a questionnaire. The data for the qualitative analysis consists of recorded interviews with a sub-sample of four participants who completed the questionnaire and agreed to take part in a follow-up interview. The first section will discuss the quantitative results per research question. The second section will discuss the qualitative data thematically.

## 4.1 Quantitative results

The next section presents the statistical findings per research question.

### 4.1.1 RQ I: What are monolingual and multilingual Flemish students' attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning?

RQ1 examines Flemish monolingual and multilingual students' attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning. The results for the items in the multilingualism attitudes scale were computed into the new variable 'multilingualism attitudes scale mean' *(1 = totally negative; 7 = totally positive)*. The results of the survey indicate that the students had a quite positive attitude ($M$ = 6.08, $SD$ = .93) towards multilingualism. When the sample was split based on self-identification as monolingual (n = 34) or multilingual (n = 40), self-identified monolinguals displayed slightly more positive attitudes ($M$ = 6.24, $SD$ = .86) towards multilingualism than self-identified multilinguals ($M$ = 5.96, $SD$ = .97). The distributions of scores were found to meet the assumptions of normality, so an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results of the test indicated no statistically significant difference, $p$=.191, $d$=.31, between the attitudes towards multilingualism of students who self-identify as monolingual and those who self-identify as multilingual.

The sample was split based on classification as monolingual (n = 52, $M$ = 6.05, $SD$ = 1) or multilingual (n = 22, $M$ = 6.17, $SD$ = .72) next. The scores were normally distributed,

1 This study follows the benchmarks of .1 for a small effect, .3 for a medium effect, and .5 for a large effect (Field, 2009).

so an independent samples t-test was run. The results show that the difference between the classified monolingual and multilinguals was not significant, *p*=.64, *d*=.12.

Students' attitudes towards language learning in general, which were measured with the language learning attitudes scale mean (*1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree*), were explored next. The results indicate that students felt relatively positive (*M* = 4.84, *SD* = 1.59) about language learning. The sample was again first split based on self-identification as monolingual or multilingual to compare both groups. The distributions were found to meet the assumptions of normality, so an independent samples t-test was conducted. The self-identified monolinguals showed slightly more positive attitudes (*M* = 5, *SD* = 1.66) than the self-identified multilinguals (*M* = 4.70, *SD* = 1.53), but an independent samples t-test showed that this difference was not significant, t(72) = .791, *p*=.432, *d*=.2.

The sample was split based on classification as monolingual (*M* = 4.77, *SD* = 1.58) or multilingual (*M* = 5, *SD* = 1.63), and an independent samples t-test was run as the distributions met the assumptions of normality. The results show that the difference between the two groups is non-significant, *p*=.579, *d*=.14.

4.1.2 Results related to RQ II: What are Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English?

RQ2 explores students' attitudes towards English and French as foreign languages, in relation with the core variables described in section 3.5.1. Aggregate scores for attitudes towards French and towards English were computed into new variables with the mean of both scales for each student (*1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree*). First, the attitudes towards French and English were compared for the whole sample. The scores for attitudes towards English (*M* = 5.83, *SD* = 1.14) were higher than the scores for attitudes towards French (*M* = 4.63, *SD* = 1.46). The means were found to obey the assumptions of normality, so a dependent samples t-test was conducted. The results of the t-test show that this difference is highly significant, t(73) = -6.00, *p*<.001, *d*=.7. In other words, Flemish students' attitudes towards English are significantly more positive than their attitudes towards French. A Pearson's r correlation analysis was run to explore the relationship between the two variables. The results indicate no significant correlation (r=.145, *p*=.218) between Flemish students' attitudes towards English and towards French. Having established that the students' attitudes towards French and English are significantly different, it was possible to examine whether there is a difference between

different groups in the sample. The next paragraphs will describe the results of the tests based on each of the variables described in 3.5.1.

*4.1.4.1 Age*

The sample was split based on age to explore the difference between language attitudes of 16-year olds (n = 13), 17-year olds (n = 31) and 18-year olds (n = 30). Their attitudes towards French were investigated first. The means per group were found to obey the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, so a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the French attitudes mean scores as the dependent variable and age as the independent variable. The results show that the groups' mean scores are not significantly different from each other, $F(2, 71) = 1.138$, $p=.326$, $\eta^2=.031$. As the differences between the groups' scores were not statistically significant, no post-hoc tests were performed.

Students' English attitudes per age group were investigated next. As this variable was non-normally distributed, a non-parametric equivalent of a one-way ANOVA, a Kruskal-Wallis test (Field, 2009, p. 391), was performed to explore the differences between groups, with age as the independent variable and attitudes towards English as the dependent variable. The results show that there was a significant difference between the groups, $F(2, 71) = 7.11$, $p=.029$. The results of post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed no statistically significant differences, after the significance values were adjusted by the Bonferroni correction. The Bonferroni-adjusted alpha levels of the comparisons between 17 and 18, 17 and 16, and 18 and 16, were .085, .076, and 1, respectively.

*4.1.4.2 Gender*

The sample was organised based on gender and two groups could be distinguished: female (n = 45) and male (n = 29). The attitudes towards French were more positive for females ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.36$) than for males ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.53$), whereas attitudes towards English were more positive for males ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.21$) than for females ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.13$). As the data is normally distributed, an independent t-test was performed to determine whether this difference was statistically significant. The results indicate that the difference between the groups was statistically significant for their attitudes towards French, $t(72) = 2.085$, $p=.041$, $d=.5$, but not for their attitudes towards English, $t(72) = -1.698$, $p=.094$, $d=.4$. In other words, female students

displayed significantly more positive attitudes towards French than their male counterparts.

*4.1.4.3 SES*

The sample was divided based on SES, using the MacArthur scale of subjective social status (Giatti et al., 2012). As explained in section 3.5.1, students that indicated 1-5 on the SES ladder were assigned to the 'lower SES' group (n = 13), and students whose SES fell between 6-10 were assigned to the 'higher SES' group (n = 61). The two groups were compared for their attitudes towards French (*M* = 4.69, *SD* = 1.73 and *M* = 4.62, *SD* 1.42, respectively) and towards English (*M* =5.84, *SD* = 1.28 and *M* = 5.83, *SD* = 1.12, respectively). An independent samples t-test was conducted for attitudes towards French and the results showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups, t(72) = 72, *p*=.872, *d*=.05. Another independent samples t-test was conducted for the groups' attitudes towards English and the findings revealed no significant difference between the groups, t(72) = .040, *p*=.968, *d*=.01. Thus, students with a lower SES do not differ significantly in their attitudes towards French or their attitudes towards English compared to students from a higher SES. A paired samples t-test was performed to investigate the difference between the attitudes towards English and French for each of the groups. The results show that the higher SES group displayed a statistically significant difference in their attitudes towards the two languages, t(60) = -5.682, *p*>.001, *d*=.6, but the lower SES group did not, t(12) = -2.04, *p*=.064, *d*=.7, although the *p* value approached significance.

*4.1.4.4 Classification as monolingual or multilingual*

The sample was split into those who were classed by the researcher, based on their first language or languages, as monolingual (*n*= 52) and those who were classed as multilingual (n = 22). The descriptive statistics show that monolinguals had more positive attitudes towards English (*M* = 5.84, *SD* = 1.15) than towards French (*M* = 4.63, *SD* = 1.36). Multilinguals also scored higher on the attitudes towards English scale (*M*= 5.83, *SD* = 1.16) than on the attitudes towards French scale (*M* = 4.64, *SD* = 1.71).

A dependent samples t-test was conducted and showed that the difference in attitudes towards both languages was significant for both monolinguals, t(51) = -5.78, *p*<.001, *d*=.8, and multilinguals, t(21) = -2.55, *p*=.019, *d*=.5.

An independent samples t-test was conducted for French and showed that both groups had no statistically significant difference in their attitudes towards the language, t(72)

=2.59, *p*=.112, *d*=.004. The same test was performed for their attitudes towards English but no significant difference was found between the two groups, t(72) = .024, *p*=.879, *d*=.006.

*4.1.4.5 Self-identification as monolingual or multilingual*

Having established that the students' attitudes towards French were significantly different based on their classification as monolingual or multilingual, it was possible to examine whether there was a difference between the self-identified monolingual and multilingual groups, based on the language or languages they are comfortable expressing themselves in. The sample was split into those who self-identified as monolingual (*n*= 34) and those who self-identified as multilingual (*n*= 40). The descriptive statistics showed that monolinguals had more positive attitudes towards English (*M* = 5.77, *SD* = .90) than towards French (*M* = 5.05, *SD* = 1.30). Multilinguals also scored higher on the attitudes towards English scale (*M*= 5.89 *SD* = 1.32) than on the attitudes towards French scale (*M* = 4.28, *SD* = 1.52). Dependent samples t-tests were conducted and showed that the difference in attitudes towards the two languages was significant for both monolinguals, t(33) = -2.90, *p*=.007, *d*=.5, and multilinguals, t(39) = -5.52, *p*<.001, *d*=.9. Monolinguals, compared to multilinguals, displayed more positive attitudes towards French but less positive attitudes towards English. Independent t-tests were run for each language separately to determine whether the self-identified multilinguals and self-identified monolinguals differed significantly in their attitudes towards French and towards English. The findings suggest that self-identified monolinguals have significantly more positive attitudes towards French than multilinguals, t(72) = 2.34, *p*=.022, *d*=.5. No significant difference was found between the two groups on their attitudes towards English, t(72) = -.43, *p*=.668, *d*=.1.

*4.1.4.6 Self-perceived competence*

The sample was split into three groups for each language, namely, level A1-A2, level B1-B2, and level C1-C2. The self-perceived competency for French was compared to their attitudes towards the language, and the self-perceived competence for English was compared to their attitudes towards English. The sample division for French shows that 35 students rated their self-competence as A1-A2, 34 students as B1-B2, and 5 students as C1-C2. The means of their attitudes towards French imply that the higher the self-perceived competence, the more positive the attitude towards the language (*M* = 4.13, *SD* = 1.46; *M* = 4.86, *SD* = 1.26; *M* =6.65, *SD* = .34, respectively). The distributions of scores were found to obey the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances,

so a one-way ANOVA was performed with the French levels as the independent variable and the French attitudes as the dependent variable. The results revealed that groups' scores were significantly different, $F(2, 71) = 8.723$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.19$. As the One-Way ANOVA revealed a significant between-group difference, post-hoc tests, Tukey's pairwise comparisons, were run. The results show that the difference between the A1-A2 and the C1-C2 groups was statistically significant, $p=.001$, as well as the difference between the B1-B2 and C1-C2 groups, $p=.018$. The difference between the A1-A2 and the B1-B2 groups was not significant, $p=.064$.

The descriptive statistics for English show that only one student rated their self-competence as A1-A2 ($M = 2.75$), 22 students as B1-B2 ($M = 5.49$, $SD = .93$), and 51 students as C1-C2 ($M = 6.04$, $SD = 1.12$). As the assumption of normality was violated, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed to investigate the between-group differences. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the groups, $F(2) = 16.795$, $p<.001$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that the A1-A2 and C1-C2 groups as well as the B1-B2 and C1-C1 groups were significantly different from each other, with Bonferroni-adjusted alpha levels of <.001 and .01 respectively. The comparison between the A1-A2 and B1-B2 groups had a non-significant Bonferroni-adjusted alpha level of .132.

A correlation analysis was also run for both languages separately and the results showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between self-perceived competence and language attitudes for both French ($r=.409$, $p<.001$) and English ($r=.337$, $p=.003$). In other words, the higher a student's self-perceived competence in a foreign language, the more positive their attitude towards that language.

*4.1.4.7 Knowledge of a language outside the curriculum*

The sample was split into those who spoke a language outside the curriculum (n = 18) and those who do not (n = 56). The descriptive statistics show that the former have marginally more positive attitudes towards English ($M = 6.18$, $SD = 1.15$) and French ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.46$) than the latter ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.13$, and $M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.48$, respectively). As the attitude scores for French were normally distributed, an independent samples t-test was performed. The results showed that the two groups did not differ significantly in their attitudes towards French, $p=.155$, $d=.3$. As the groups' scores for attitudes towards English were non-normally distributed, a Mann-Whitney U-test was performed. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups' attitudes towards English, $p=.245$, $\eta^2=.02$.

*4.1.4.8 Language contact or exposure outside of school*

The sample was split into two groups for each language, namely those who had indicated that they had participated in extracurricular activities relating to the FL, and those who did not. For French, the attitude scores of students who answered 'yes' (n = 20) were higher (*M* = 5.08, *SD* = 1.34) than those who answered 'no' (n = 54, *M* = 4.47, *SD* = 1.49). The distributions of scores were found to obey the assumptions of normality, so an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results showed that the difference was not significant, $p$=.097, $d$=.4. For English the students who had indicated contact with or exposure to the language outside of school (n = 15, *M* = 6.15, *SD* = 1.40) had more positive attitudes towards the language than those who had not (n = 59, *M* = 5.75, *SD* = 1.07). As this variable was non-normally distributed, a Mann-Whitney U-test was performed. The results showed that the two groups were statistically significantly different from each other, $p$=.039, $\eta^2$=.06.

4.1.3 Results related to RQ III: What is the relationship between students' cultural identity, their language attitudes, and their self-rated L2 proficiency for French and English?

This research question is split into three parts and investigates the relationships between (a) cultural identity and language attitudes; (b) cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency; and (c) language attitudes and self-rated L2 proficiency.

*4.1.3.1 cultural identity and language attitudes*

The sample was divided into six groups based on the ethnic identity label the students chose, namely, Flemish (n = 12), Flemish>Belgian (n = 20), Belgian>Flemish (n = 9), Flemish=Belgian (n = 15) and Belgian (n = 10), other (n = 8). Students' attitudes towards French were investigated first. The distributions of scores were found to obey the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, so a one-way ANOVA was conducted, with the French attitude mean scores as the dependent variable and the cultural identity label as the independent variable. The results revealed that the groups' scores were significantly different from each other, F(5, 68) = 2.993, $p$=.017, $\eta^2$=.18. As the one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant between-group difference, post-hoc tests, Tukey's pairwise comparisons, were conducted. The results revealed that the 'other' group's attitudes towards French were statistically significantly different from those of the Flemish>Belgian group *(MD* = -1.93*, p*=.015), the Belgian>Flemish group (*MD* = -2.21, $p$=.018) and the Flemish=Belgian group (*MD* = -1.80, $p$=.042). The remaining combinations did not reveal statistically significant differences. In other words,

the Flemish>Belgian, Belgian>Flemish and Flemish=Belgian groups had significantly more positive attitudes towards French than the 'other' group.

Students' attitudes towards English were investigated next. As this dependent variable was not normally distributed, a one-way non-parametric ANOVA, a Kruskal-Wallis test (Field, 2009, p. 391) was performed to investigate the differences between groups, with cultural identity as the independent variable. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups, F(5) = 1.534, $p$=.009. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that the Flemish=Belgian ($M$ = 4.93, $SD$ = 1.38) and the Flemish>Belgian ($M$ = 6.21, $SD$ = .99) groups were statistically significantly different from each other, with a Bonferroni-adjusted alpha level of $p$=.033. In other words, students who identified as Flemish>Belgian (Flemish first, then Belgian) displayed statistically significantly more positive attitudes towards English than students who identified as Flemish=Belgian (equally Flemish and Belgian).

A correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relationship between cultural identity and the students' language attitudes. Since cultural identity is a nominal variable, Spearman's rho was chosen as the suitable correlation coefficient. The findings for French showed no significant correlation between students' cultural identity and their attitudes towards French, $r_s$=.171, $p$=.144. The findings for English also showed that there was no significant correlation between cultural identity and students' attitudes towards English, $r_s$=-.110, $p$=.349.

*4.1.3.2 cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency*

Students' French self-rated proficiency mean scores were analysed first. The distributions of scores for this variable for each cultural identity group were found to obey the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, so a one-way ANOVA was conducted with the French confidence mean scores as the dependent variable and the cultural identity label as the independent variable. The results revealed that the groups' mean scores were not significantly different from each other, F(5, 68) = 1.94, $p$=.099, $\eta^2$=.125. As the difference between the cultural identity groups' scores was not significant, no post-hoc tests were performed.

Students' self-rated proficiency for English was investigated next. As this dependent variable was non-normally distributed, a one-way non-parametric ANOVA, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to investigate the differences between groups, with cultural identity as the independent variable. The results showed no statistically significant

difference between the groups, F(5) = 11.055, $p$=.099, so no post-hoc tests were performed.

The relationship between cultural identity and self-rated proficiency was explored next. Since cultural identity is a nominal variable, a Spearman's r correlation was performed. The results for French showed no significant correlation between students' cultural identity and their self-rated French proficiency, $r_s$=.160, $p$=.173. The findings for English also showed no significant correlation, $r_s$=-.016, $p$=.892.

*4.1.3.3 Language attitudes and self-rated L2 proficiency*

A correlation analysis was chosen to explore the relationship between students' attitudes towards French and English, and their self-rated proficiency for those languages. As both continuous variables were normally distributed, a Pearson's r correlation was performed for each language. The results for French revealed a significant, positive, strong correlation between students' attitudes towards French and their language proficiency in the language (r=.586, $p$<.001), suggesting that the higher a student's self-rated L2 proficiency, the more favourable their attitude towards it. The results for English showed a significant, positive, moderate correlation between the students' attitudes and their self-rated English proficiency (r=.486, $p$<.001). In other words, the higher a student rates their English skills, the more positive their attitude towards it.

4.1.4 Summary

To sum up, the results of the present study do not support hypothesis 1 (attitudes towards language learning); fully support hypothesis 2 (more positive attitudes towards English than French); reject hypothesis 3 (classification as monolingual or multilingual not linked to L2 attitudes); reject hypothesis 4 (no effect of knowledge of a language outside the curriculum); fully support hypothesis 5 (self-perceived L2 competence is positively correlated with attitude towards the L2; partially support hypothesis 6 (females have more positive attitudes towards French but not towards English); reject hypothesis 7 (effect of SES on language attitudes); and do not support hypothesis 8 (effect of age on language attitudes).

## 4.2 Qualitative results

Four participants who completed the questionnaire (three girls and one boy aged 16-18) agreed to take part in the follow-up interviews. The interviewees' names were replaced with pseudonyms and their details are presented in table 3. The interview data was

transcribed (see appendix I for example transcript), read and coded into four themes that could be distinguished from the data, based on the research questions: attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning, attitudes towards French and English, cultural identity, and English and French self-rated proficiency. The subsequent sections present an analysis of the interview data organised into the themes.

| **Pseudonym** | **Age** | **Gender** | **School** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Anmar** | 17 | female | Sint-Franciscus College Heusden-Zolder |
| **Maria** | 18 | female | Campus Het Spoor Mol |
| **Alex** | 18 | male | Koninklijk Atheneum Geel |
| **Weyam** | 16 | female | Sint Dimpna College Geel |

Table 3 Interviewees' details

4.2.1 Attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning

Three of the four interviewees considered themselves to be multilingual, which includes English and Dutch for all of them, but not French. One student did not consider herself multilingual, as English and French are not her native languages. Nevertheless, the interviewees all stressed the importance of being able to express oneself in multiple languages in today's world, as they believed it creates more opportunities and it allows communication with more people. However, it was primarily English that the interviewees viewed as a beneficial language to master besides one's mother tongue. They considered foreign languages, English especially, an advantage as it is a tool to communicate with people. The following quote is representative of that view.

> I am convinced that by knowing another language you open more doors for yourself, shall we say. (…). And certainly, with globalisation, I think that English is a very useful language to know and one that I would like to continue in myself. I also find it very interesting that people can communicate on a global level using one language. And I think that is very important. (…) It's not that any other languages are not as important or useful [as English]. It's always possible that any language you speak can have advantages if you meet someone who speaks that language. But English is just very clear and present, and that makes a huge difference. Anmar, 17

Even though the interviewees considered multilingualism useful and even important in Belgium, they did not value it as a key part of the Flemish identity. When asked about the value of being multilingual in Belgian society, three students stated that speaking multiple languages is not essential, but they did consider it an advantage. One student did view multilingualism as a key part of being Belgian, as the country has multiple official languages, with French being cited as the key language in Belgium, besides their first language Dutch, by all interviewees. Two students explained that speaking both French and Dutch creates more opportunities in terms of work and travel in Belgium. Yet, the interviewees explained that, like many other students, they have low motivation to learn French. One student who acknowledged the importance of French in Belgium, but refers to some students' barrier to language learning, said:

> So I think French is a really good language anyway. For people specifically from Flanders or Belgium, I think it is very useful. But if you force that on someone or try to teach someone French who doesn't really want to or who isn't ready or open to it, I think that can have the opposite effect and that it will end up not going according to plan. Anmar, 17

One student believed that speaking and learning other languages cultivates a language aptitude that is transferable to all other languages that one might learn.

> I think that you get a kind of language feeling from it. And that language feeling helps because learning French makes it easier to learn English and the other way around. It's pretty easy now to take a new language and try to see what the important points of the grammar are, and to understand it as quickly as possible. So I think that a language opens a lot of new doors. Maria, 18

#### 4.2.2 Attitudes towards French and English

All four interviewees found French a beautiful and useful language in Belgium, but not beyond the national borders. One student pointed out the similarities between French vocabulary and Flemish (dialect) words and said that it added to the enjoyment of the language.

> I find it a very elegant language. It sounds beautiful, and I think the sounds are very magical. I find that very beautiful. (…) [Speaking French] opens a lot of doors in Belgium and it has potential, but not really outside of Belgium. Anmar, 17

Even though they perceived French as useful in Belgium, as it allows them to communicate with French-speaking citizens, they indicated that they do not enjoy the experience of learning French. The aspect that hindered their learning enjoyment is the lack of 'fun' in French classes. One participant explained that French classes focus too

much on grammar and rules, instead of on practising speaking. Two interviewees stated that they would be willing to participate more in French class if the topics and activities encouraged more creative and spontaneous speaking. An illustrative quote is the following:

> I would take part more if what we did was more fun. All we do is learn grammar and rules and study vocabulary. Weyam, 16

Two students cited history and politics to be a key reason that students do not enjoy learning French, as they believed that Walloons' lack of Dutch proficiency makes it less likely that Flemish students will be motivated to learn French. Furthermore, in Belgian history, they explained, Flemish Dutch has been discriminated against compared to French, and this makes them less willing to learn French.

> We used to be forced to speak French, so now we have a lot of pride in our Flemish language. (...) You also see that Walloons simply cannot speak Dutch, so that makes it much less attractive for us to learn French. Alex, 18

Anmar is the only student who considered English a beautiful language. She attributed this to the different accents she can distinguish in the language, an ability that she has not mastered for French. She added that English classes are generally more engaging and cover more topics that are relevant for their generation, such as social media.

> I'm talking about dialects and accents, because in French, for example, I don't have that sensitivity at all, (…) I don't hear [accents] in French, but in English I hear it very clearly and then I have to admit that I don't like some accents and I like other accents very much. (…) In English classes, we do things such as writing tweets to debate someone and I think that makes the classes more relevant and enjoyable. Anmar, 17

The interviewees thought English to be more useful than French and one student said that French used to have a higher status in Flanders, but the language has now been replaced by English.

> French, I think, may have been more important in the past, but not really at the moment. Yes, many people still speak it but I think English is more likely to be a language that they would use if they want to communicate with someone who does not have the same mother tongue. Maria, 18

#### 4.2.3 Cultural identity

The participants all considered being 'Flemish' a part of their cultural identity. Anmar, 17, identifies as Flemish first and then Belgian as her family stems from a small town in the

Flemish province of Limburg. She explained that her background is simple and straightforward because she does not have the complex identity that one with different heritages might have. Her experience abroad, as an exchange student in Ireland, made her feel even more aware of her Flemish identity, though she struggled to pinpoint exactly what that identity entails. She emphasized the pride she takes in her local identity, linked to her home province and hometown, over a national identity. Nevertheless, she still identifies as Belgian because Flanders is geographically located in Belgium, though it is not a strong part of her identity. Anmar referred to a lack of a strong national or Belgian identity and how that expresses itself in language. The following extract illustrates this.

> I think there is a lack of Flemish people who speak French and Walloon people who speak Dutch. I think [the national identity] has also broken down a bit. (…) I still consider myself a Belgian, but I would not necessarily say that I would immediately feel a connection if I met a Walloon. Although I did meet a Walloon on an exchange, but speaking didn't go very well in French, so I spoke English. Anmar, 17

All four participants considered language and cultural identity to be strongly linked, as one influences the other and vice versa. Alex, 18, identifies as Flemish because he speaks the Flemish variety of Dutch, and he identifies as Belgian because he is learning French. However, he identifies as Flemish first because, he explained, being equally Flemish and Belgian would mean he is fluent in French, which he thought he is not. The two languages, Dutch and French, influence each other and that shows the intricacies and the mutual influence that the various layers of Flemish-Belgian identity have, according to Alex. He elaborated by giving examples of Flemish sayings and Belgian French words that he learned in school, to illustrate how language is 'a symptom' of his cultural identity. Thus, speaking a language, or language variety, allows others to identify you as belonging to a group or culture. Maria, raised in a Moroccan household in Belgium, identifies as equally Flemish and Belgian. She concurred with Alex, stating that language can make you feel at home or out of place. Speaking a language allows you to absorb a part of its culture. Furthermore, she believed that being Belgian and Moroccan implies having French as part of your language repertoire, even if you do not speak the language fluently. The following two quotes demonstrate their perspectives.

> Being Belgian and Flemish is clear from the languages I speak. Honestly, I would not say I speak French per se, but I am learning the language because I am Belgian. Flemish is the best language for me because the proverbs are so good and they always hit the mark. I

> also think that French is typically Belgian because the Brussels dialect has many Flemish words in it; we learned about it in French class this year. When I say *'nonante'* [Belgian French for *ninety*], outside of Belgium, they will immediately know that I'm Belgian. (…) [language] is a symptom of my identity because how I sound is who I am. As soon as I say something, people will know where I am from. Alex, 18

> And French, I think, is part of my cultural identity but mainly the Belgian and Moroccan part, of course, because we are living in a bilingual country and that is part of it. Even if I am not fluent in French, I still understand it more than someone who went to school in, say, Portugal, because I am Belgian and Moroccan. (…) If you speak a language, I think that you take something from those cultures, which also has an influence on your cultural identity. Maria, 18

Having discussed French and Dutch, the interviewees were asked how English fits into their cultural identity. Three of the participants believed that the language was not linked to their identity, but one participant did view it as part of her culture. Weyam, 16, clarified by giving social media as an example of how English is linked to her cultural identity. She explained that social media is an inevitable part of her generation's upbringing and that is also linked to her identity. An illustrative quote is the following.

> I do think that English is linked to my culture. For my generation anyway. We're all exposed to it a lot more now and you just pick it up faster. (…) And I think we have an advantage over other generations in learning English. If I look at my parents now, for example, neither of them had so much contact with social media on which English is the main language. Weyam, 16

#### 4.2.4 French and English self-rated L2 proficiency

The four interviewees rated their proficiency for French lower than for English. They cited the difficult French grammar rules and the unfamiliar vocabulary as the main reasons for the lower self-confidence. Two students considered English to be quite similar to Dutch, which they said helps them acquire it easier. They also acknowledged the lack of exposure to French, whereas they regularly consume content in English. Thus, the lack of practice in French is a problem that they are not confronted with in English. All interviewees stated that look up words in order to understand the text when reading French. They all admitted to struggling to understand French (listening), because of the high pace of the language. One student said she feel self-conscious when speaking French, so she avoids it. She explained that making mistakes when speaking English is not something that impacts her self-confidence, but it does for French. All interviewees expressed a wish to be more confident and fluent in French. The following quotes by two students capture their views.

> Firstly, French has its rules, and I don't think I've mastered them yet. And for English I have because I've come in contact with it a lot and we're exposed to it almost everywhere; I mean on social media etc. I think you pick it up faster and it's not a very, very difficult language and that's why a lot of people I know have an easier time with it than with French. (…) I think students don't have enough practice with French because we only speak it in French class. I wish there were more opportunities to speak it in a casual way so I could be more confident. (…) I would have loved to speak French like I speak English. Anmar, 17

> French is the least fluent one of all my languages. I try my best but it's just not as good as my English. I do wish I spoke it fluently because I feel very embarrassed and nervous when I have to speak it. Maria, 18

The lack of confidence was attributed to an excessive focus on correcting mistakes in French class. The students did not feel the same awareness for their English-speaking skills, even though they realized they still make mistakes when speaking or writing the language. According to one participant, Weyam, French classes are overly focussed on 'correcting' mistakes you make, whereas in English classes, the aim is to practice speaking to be more fluent. Two other participants mentioned this difference as well. The following extract shows that opinion.

> In French classes, we are constantly focussing on the mistakes we make. We even have to study from a book called '*Erreurs courantes'* to memorize the mistakes that Flemish speakers make the most in French. I think it scares us a lot and it makes us very stressed about making mistakes. In English class, it is not so bad if you make a mistake. I wish our French teachers would be more forgiving so that we are less nervous about speaking or writing. Weyam, 16

# 5 Discussion

This chapter will discuss and interpret the findings outlined in chapter 4 in relation to the previously reviewed literature. The quantitative results will be discussed per research question, and the qualitative data will be used as an illustration or explanation of patterns discovered in the quantitative data.

## 5.1 RQ I: What are monolingual and multilingual Flemish students' attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning?

RQ1 examined Flemish monolingual and multilingual students' attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning. Students' attitudes towards multilingualism are quite positive in general. When comparing self-identified monolingual and multilingual students' attitudes towards multilingualism, the results showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the groups. The comparison of classified monolinguals and multilinguals also revealed no significant difference. Thus, both comparisons suggest that monolinguals and multilinguals do not differ in the attitudes towards multilingualism. These findings concur with Mettewie's (2004) who found that bilinguals and monolinguals in Brussels do not differ in their attitudes towards bilingualism. However, the researcher only considers the inclusion of French and/or Dutch in the classification as monolingual or bilingual, whereas the present study considered every student who specified more than one first language (classification) as multilingual, as well as students that are comfortable expressing themselves in more than one language (self-identification). Furthermore, Mettewie's study, even though a part of the participants were Dutch-speaking Flemish students attending school in Brussels, the other part were French-speaking non-Flemish students. Thus, the mixed sample differs from the present study's homogenous Flemish sample. Although Mettewie found no difference between monolinguals and multilinguals, she did find that French-speaking students are significantly less positive towards multilingualism than their Dutch-speaking peers, and that Flemish students with a strong Flemish identity who have more positive attitudes towards multilingualism. Thus, it suggests that cultural identity or first language might have an influence on attitudes towards multilingualism. The relationship between multilingualism and cultural identity was not explored in the statistical results of the present study.

The qualitative data offers further insight into the students' perceptions of multilingualism, based on interviews with a sub-sample of four students. These results reveal that students believe that the ability to express oneself in multiple languages is

important, as provides opportunities and communication with more people; however, most interviewees did not view multilingualism as an essential component of Belgian identity. Nevertheless, it is their native language or languages in combination with English that they perceive as the most useful on a global level. Yet, they believe French is the most important language, besides Dutch, in Belgium, though the students tended to express low motivation to learn French.

The comparison of the groups' attitudes towards language learning also showed no significant difference between monolinguals and multilinguals (both classified and self-identified). This finding differs from Danzaka (2011), whose qualitative study with six students did find a pattern in which literacy learning was influenced by their identity as monolingual or bilingual. However, Danzaka's qualitative study impedes generalization, and this, therefore, makes comparison with the present study difficult. However, the present study's results do concur with Mettewie's (2004) findings that also showed no difference in attitudes towards language learning by monolinguals and bilinguals. Yet, Mettewie (2004) did detect that Flemish students with a strong Flemish identity have more positive attitudes towards language learning. The relationship between language learning and cultural identity was not explored in the statistical results of the present study.

The interview results expand on the statistical results and show that the interviewees viewed French as the language that negatively impacts how they perceive language learning in school. Thus, because they have negative feelings and attitudes towards French and towards French classes, they state that they do not enjoy learning languages in general in school. However, one student expressed the belief that the ability to learn a language is a cross-linguistic skill that is transferable to other language learning processes.

## 5.2 RQ II: What are Flemish students' attitudes towards French and English?

RQ2 investigated students' attitudes towards English and French. The first part of this RQ compared French and English for all students. The results showed that Flemish secondary school students' attitudes towards English are significantly more favourable, with a medium effect size, than their attitudes towards French. These findings align with previous studies (e.g. Dewaele, 2005a; Lochtman et al., 2004; Mettewie, 2004; Mettewie & Janssens, 2006) who found that Dutch-speaking Flemish students have more favourable attitudes towards English compared to French, and add to existing research

that shows that attitudes are language-specific. This difference in appreciation of both languages could be explained by the societal status of both languages in Flanders. Though French used to be an important language in Flanders, the socioeconomic power balance has tipped in favour of the Flemings in recent decades, decreasing the status of French in the region. Although French is still essential for some prestige jobs, English is perceived as being more useful (Dewaele, 2005a). The presence of English in popular culture, with Flemish culture favouring subtitling rather than dubbing, the language has consolidated its place in Flemish students' minds. This explanation is revealed in the interview responses, with students saying they find French a beautiful language that might be useful in Belgium, but not internationally. Students point out that they do not enjoy learning French as the classes are too focussed on grammar and rules and not enough attention is spent on speaking. This sentiment is in line with Dewaele's (2005a) participant comments, in which students expressed that French is more difficult than English. Furthermore, two students in the present study explained that history, with Flemish being discriminated against in the past, and politics are reasons that students do not enjoy learning French, as they believe that Walloons lack Dutch proficiency skills. Students perceive English to be a more useful language, though most students do not consider it beautiful. This last sentiment is in contrast with Dewaele's participant comments, who expressed that they find English more attractive than French. Furthermore, in the present study's interview data, Flemish students name Walloons' lack of Dutch proficiency, as well as Dutch past oppression in Belgium, to explain the lack of motivation for Flemish students to learn French. Hence, this view hints at a link between Flemish identity and language attitudes towards French.

However, contrary to Dewaele (2005a) who found a weak positive correlation, the present study found no correlation between attitudes towards French and towards English. Although Dewaele does not discuss or interpret the correlation between the two languages, this seems like an interesting difference which could be linked to the foreign language learning experience in the school that Dewaele used for his study, whereas this study had four schools in the sample.

The second part of this RQ explored the relationship between the Flemish students' attitudes and individual differences in: age; gender; SES; classification and self-identification as monolingual or multilingual; self-perceived language competence; knowledge of a language outside the curriculum; and language contact and exposure outside school. The variables will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

### 5.2.1 Age

The first variable that was investigated was age. The results showed no significant differences between the attitudes of 16-, 17- or 18-year-olds towards French or English, which may have been due to the marginal differences in age between the groups. Some previous studies that did find a moderating effect of age on language attitudes, such as Kormos and Csizér (2008) who compared secondary school students, university students and adult learners, and Lasagabaster (2005) who found an effect of age when studying undergraduates aged 18 to 50 years old, as well as Peçenek (2011) who included secondary school students in their sample. Even though the current study only had a marginal difference of one year between the groups, its sample is more similar to Peçenek's (2011) who did find an effect of age. The difference between Peçenek (2011) and the current study could be that the Peçenek included secondary school students of all ages, whereas the present study limited the age of participants to 16 and older. Although there was only a difference of one year between the groups in the present study, this study concurs with Masgoret and Gardner (2003), whose meta-analysis consisted of primary school, secondary school or higher education students, and who detected no interaction between age and students' evaluation of the target language. Thus, even with groups that have a bigger difference, no effect of age was detected. However, an important remark for the present study is related to the group sizes. Though the 17 and 18-year-olds groups were of a similar size with about 30 participants each, the 16-year-olds group had less than half (n = 13) so the imbalance in group size may have had an impact on the results as its representation of the population might have been limited. However, the researcher took into account the skewness and kurtosis to choose the most suitable test as set out by Field (2009). The contrasting results with different age groups reveal a need for more systematic age-specific research into foreign language attitudes.

### 5.2.2 Gender

Gender was the next independent variable that was included to compare groups. Although gender was not specified as a binary variable in the questionnaire, only two groups could be distinguished in the sample, namely, female and male. The results suggested that females have significantly more positive attitudes towards French than their male peers, but no statistical difference was detected for English. These results concur with studies discussed in the literature review (e.g. Lasagabaster, 2005; Spolsky, 1989; Sicam & Lucas, 2016) who found that females are more likely to have favourable attitudes towards a foreign language than their male peers. However, the current study

deviates from those studies, as no gender difference was found for English. This aligns with Dewaele (2005a) who found the same pattern for Flemish students, which could be explained by the greater instrumental value of English for Flemish students, as highlighted in the interviews by both males and females, which might make a gender difference less perceptible.

### 5.3.3 SES

Students with a higher SES were then compared to those with a lower SES, with no difference being found in their attitudes towards French and English. Heng and Caleon (2008) found that lower SES learners have more favourable L2 attitudes, while others (e.g. Ladegaard, 2000; Mettewie, 2004; Dewaele, 2005a) found no effect of SES. Heng and Caleon (2008), however, used a measure of SES consisting of five objective indications, which could have created a more nuanced image of SES compared to the other studies that use only one indication. Additionally, whereas studies previously discussed in this dissertation used more objective measures of SES such as parental education (e.g. Dewaele, 2005a), this study operationalized SES via a more subjective measure, the MacArthur scale of subjective social status (Giatti et al., 2012). This was better suited to this study, which focused on students' perceptions of their attitudes, identity; and proficiency. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the subjective nature of this scale may have influenced the results. An additional exploratory analysis was conducted, and each group was also tested on the difference between their attitudes towards French and towards English. The higher SES group showed significantly more positive attitudes towards English than towards French, but the lower SES group showed no statistically significant difference. The interview responses reveal that students view English as a tool to access international opportunities. Students from a higher SES might have more access to international opportunities, e.g. travel, study and work abroad, which might make them more aware of the instrumental value of English compared to their lower SES peers.

### 5.3.4 Classification as monolingual or multilingual

Students were compared based on their classification as monolingual or multilingual, which was operationalized through their native languages. The most frequent language combination in the questionnaire responses was Dutch and Turkish. The results show that there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of their attitudes towards French, nor their attitudes towards English. Nevertheless, the results suggested that both monolingual and multilinguals have significantly more positive attitudes towards English than towards French. Lasagabaster's (2001) study suggests that first

language (i.e. being monolingual or bilingual) influences language attitudes but the present study found no significant differences. However, this could be because the present study investigated foreign language attitudes, whereas Lasabaster only compared monolinguals and multilinguals for attitudes towards the native or second language, but not for their foreign language(s).

The present study's results also differ from De Valck (2007), who found that multilingual (French and Dutch) Flemish students have more positive attitudes towards French than their monolingual (Dutch) peers. However, the comparison between this study and the present study is problematic, as De Valck only counted French-Dutch bilinguals, whereas the present study included all language combinations. Hence, French was a foreign language for all participants in this study, which was not the case for De Valck (2007).

### 5.3.5 Self-identification as monolingual or multilingual

Self-identified monolinguals were compared to self-identified multilinguals. The questionnaire responses showed that the most frequent combination for the multilingual students was Dutch and English, although some students included Turkish, Arabic and/or Amazigh. Though Danzaka's (2011) study used qualitative data to determine whether participants' self-identification as monolingual or bilingual would affect their choice between English and Spanish when given the option, her results showed no difference between the two groups in her sample. However, Danzaka (2011) studied English and Spanish, which were the L1 and L2 of monolinguals, and the L1s of bilinguals. The present study used the students' two foreign languages, which makes it problematic to draw parallels. The results from the present study showed that both groups (self-identified monolinguals and self-identified multilinguals) had significantly more favourable attitudes towards English than towards French. However, the self-identified monolinguals had significantly more positive attitudes towards French than their self-identified multilingual counterparts, though no significant difference was detected for English It is particularly interesting that multilinguals, for which the most frequent language combination was Dutch and English, did not show a stronger affinity with English but did feel less positively about French. It is important to acknowledge that other variables, such as gender, possibly play a role in this difference.

### 5.3.6 Self-perceived competence

Students were compared based on their self-perceived competence level (as per the CEFR), resulting in three groups, namely A1-A2, B1-B2, and C1-C2. The findings indicated that students with a higher self-perceived French competence level had more

positive attitudes towards French, with a significant difference between the A1-A2 and the C1-C2 groups. For English, the C1-C2 group had significantly more positive attitudes towards the language than the A1-A2 and B1-B2 groups. A correlation analysis showed a moderate positive correlation between self-perceived competence and attitudes towards both French and English. In other words, the higher a student's self-perceived competence level the more favourable attitudes towards that language. These findings are in line with previous research (Dewaele, 2005a; Lasagabaster, 2005; Mettewie & Janssens, 2006) that indicates that students with higher self-perceived competence have more favourable attitudes towards a foreign language.

Only five students rated their French self-competence as C1 or C2, whereas for English, only one student was in the A1-A2 group. This is a striking contrast, as French is one of Belgium's official languages. However, interviewees indicate that they have less confidence in their French skills because they do not enjoy French (classes), and because of its perceived difficulty and limited opportunities to practice.

### 5.3.7 Knowledge of a language outside the curriculum

Students who speak a language outside the curriculum (about 25% of participants), i.e. a language other than Dutch, French or English, did not differ in their attitudes towards French or English compared to those who do not. This finding differs from that of Lasagabaster (2005), who found that students with knowledge of a language that was not included in the Basque curriculum had more positive attitudes towards the foreign language. The Basque context slightly differs from the Flemish one, as the Basque has less speakers and Lasagabaster explains that Basque speakers have to "build attitudinal fences" to protect their linguistic rights, against not just the majority language but also against foreign languages such as English. Thus, people who speak other languages may be less inclined to have the same inhibition towards foreign languages. Flemings, however, are the majority population in Belgium and the socioeconomic 'threat' that French offers nowadays is not as big compared to Basque and Spanish, thus, Flemish students, whether or not they speak other foreign languages, are less likely to have attitudinal fences up.

### 5.3.8 Language contact or exposure outside of school

Finally, the students were compared based on whether they have any language contact or exposure outside of school, operationalized as participation in extra-curricular activities. For French, about 27% of participants answered 'yes' compared to only 20% for English. The findings revealed that students who have participated in English extra-

curricular activities have significantly more favourable attitudes than those who have never participated in such activities, whereas no difference was found for French. This finding concurs with Côté and Mettewie (2008) as well as Mettewie and Janssens (2006) who found that students who had more exposure to or contact with a foreign language show more favourable attitudes towards that language. However, as the authors remarked, it is difficult to determine whether more exposure is the results of positive attitudes or vice versa.

The 'specify' box for these items in the questionnaire shows that the majority of students participated in language camps and/or school exchanges, or watched TV or movies or read a book in the foreign language. However, students may have been unsure what was meant by extracurricular activities as one student wrote 'I'm not sure if this counts, but I sometimes watch French movies' in the 'specify' box. Thus, the lack of a significant results could be related to the ambiguity of the item in the questionnaire. Additionally, it is important to remark that French language camps and exchange programmes are more easily accessible to Flemish students than English language camps or exchange programmes, which possibly explains why more students had participated in French extracurricular activities.

## 5.3 RQ III: What is the relationship between students' cultural identity, their language attitudes, and their self-rated L2 proficiency for French and English?

RQ4 was split into three parts and explored the relationships between: cultural identity with language attitudes; cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency; and language attitudes self-rated L2 proficiency.

### 5.3.1 Cultural identity and language attitudes

The relationship between cultural identity and language attitudes showed no significant correlation for their attitudes towards French, nor for their attitudes towards English. It is possible that the unbalanced group sizes made it more challenging to detect significant differences. The findings did indicate that the 'other' identity group had significantly less favourable attitudes towards French than the Flemish>Belgian, Belgian>Flemish, and Flemish=Belgian groups, though no other significant differences were detected. A closer examination of the 'other' group, in which the most frequent identities mainly consisted of Italian and Turkish, uncovers that the significantly less positive attitudes of the 'other' group could be explained by the absence of French in the Turkish and Italian national

identities, which is not the case for the Belgian national identity. Thus, students with an 'other' cultural identity might feel more detached from all forms of Flemish and/or Belgian identities, which could interfere with their language attitudes towards French. Interview data reveals that students believe that being Belgian implies that French is part of your identity, regardless of whether one speaks it. Thus, it could be that the students who identify as Flemish and/or Belgian all perceive French as being part of their identity, as they are all learning the language in school, which might make the differences less perceivable between those groups.

For English, the group that put their Flemish identity before their Belgian one had more positive attitudes towards the language than the group who consider themselves equally Flemish and Belgian. Although interview data shows that most interviewees do not consider English a part of their identity, it could be possible that a stronger Flemish identity motivates learners to gravitate more strongly towards English in school, as some interviewees believe English is very similar to Dutch.

The present study's findings depart from Dewaele (2005a) who found that identity did influence language attitudes towards French but not for English. However, Dewaele's identity variable was binary (Flemish-Belgian or Belgian-Flemish), whereas the present study included five possible identity labels, as well as an 'other' box in which participants could specify their identity if they wished to. Thus, the identity variable in the present study was able to represent more subtle attitudinal differences for both languages.

### 5.3.2 Cultural identity and self-rated L2 proficiency

The results revealed no significant differences between different cultural identities' self-rated proficiency for French or English, nor a significant correlation between identity and self-rated L2 proficiency. These findings differ from previous studies that did show a link between cultural identity and L2 proficiency, both self-rated and objectively measured proficiency (e.g. Trofimovich et al., 2013; Noels et al., 1996). It is particularly interesting that the present study's findings differed from Noels et al. (1996), as this study also looked at self-rated proficiency. Students in Noels et al. who had a stronger Chinese identity had less confidence in their English skills than students with a stronger Canadian identity. However, Noels et al. studied Chinese students in Canada, whereas this study focussed on Flemish students in Flanders. The interviews revealed that students are less confident in French than in English, regardless of their cultural identity. Their low self-confidence in French stems from the language's difficult grammar and unfamiliar vocabulary, whereas the students find English more accessible due to exposure and

similarities with Dutch. Nevertheless, more systematic research in multilingual contexts is required to explore the effect of identity on self-rated L2 proficiency.

### 5.3.3 Language attitudes and self-rated L2 proficiency

The relationship between language attitudes and self-rated L2 proficiency showed a strong positive correlation for French, and a moderate positive correlation for English, suggesting that the higher a student's self-rated proficiency in a language, the more positive their attitude towards it. These findings converge with Mettewie's (2004) who found that both self-rated and objectively measured L2 proficiency was positively correlated with L2 attitudes. The interview data showed that students, even though they go to different schools, all enjoy English and English classes more and they are more confident in the English skills because they practice it more. Students feel less confident about their French proficiency because they do not enjoy the language or the classes due to a predominant focus on grammar rules. One interviewee believed that more speaking practice in French class would lead to more enjoyment. Thus, according to the students, the low self-confidence is rooted in lack of speaking practice and lack of enjoyment of French classes, which could explain the observed relationship between language attitudes and self-rated French proficiency.

## Conclusion

The present study adds to the existing research on language attitudes in multilingual contexts by examining Flemish students' attitudes towards multilingualism, language learning, and French and English. Research Question 1 examined students' attitudes towards multilingualism and language learning, with no difference being found between monolinguals and multilinguals. Research Question 2 investigated language attitudes towards French and English, with the present study showing that Flemish students have more positive attitudes towards English than French. Participant responses indicated that English has a higher instrumental value for students, especially regarding international opportunities and communication, while French has lost its status of prestige in Flanders. Furthermore, students are more exposed to English in pop culture and they perceive the language as more accessible than French. Furthermore, students consider English classes fun and engaging, with more speaking practice opportunities, whereas French is perceived as more difficult, with French classes being overly focussed on rules instead of providing spontaneous speaking activities. The tense history and political dynamics between the Dutch- and French-speaking communities is expressed in students' reflection on their language attitudes, with students citing Walloons' lack of Dutch proficiency as an explanation for Flemish students' lack of motivation to learn French, even though they acknowledge its importance in Belgium and they consider it a beautiful language. Results show that attitudes towards French were influenced by gender, self-identification as monolingual or multilingual, and self-perceived competence level, whereas attitudes towards English were influenced by self-perceived competence level, and contact or exposure outside of school. No effect was found of age, SES, classification as monolingual or multilingual, or knowledge of a language outside the curriculum. The results of the present study differ from previous studies concerning the influence of SES, monolingualism or bilingualism and language contact or exposure outside school. Research Question 3 looked into the relationship between cultural identity, language attitudes, and self-rated L2 proficiency. Although cultural identity had an influence on English and French attitudes, no correlation was found between identity and language attitudes. The results revealed no significant difference or correlation between cultural identity and self-rated English or French proficiency. An examination of the relationship between language attitudes and self-rated English or French proficiency showed that the higher a student rated their L2 proficiency, the more positive their attitude towards that L2. This relationship was particularly strong for French, with students attributing their lower confidence in their French skills to strict grammar rules, and lack of practice and enjoyment in French classes.

In light of these findings, it is important for language educators in Flanders to focus on increasing students' motivation, engagement and joy in French classes, so as to improve their attitudes towards the language. Teachers should provide more opportunities for speaking practice, to increase students' self-rated proficiency in the L2. Furthermore, teachers and material developers should strive to focus less on grammar rules in their French lessons, as students perceive this as impacting their enjoyment and engagement of the language.

It is essential to outline some of the limitations of the present study that might have impacted the findings and thus restrict the generalization of the results. Firstly, the operationalization of some, or indeed all, of the independent variables might have influenced the outcomes if they did not fully capture what they were aiming to measure. This question is particularly raised with the self-identification variable, as well as the subjective SES measure, and the language contact or exposure outside of school. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the items on the questionnaire, possibly due to the translation for the attitudinal items, might have shaped participants' interpretations and thus impacted the results. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to conduct the data collection in person, which would have eliminated some of the ambiguity as the researcher could have provided clarification or explanation to participants while they were completing the questionnaire. Secondly, the small sample size for both the questionnaire (n=74) and the interviews (n=4) further emphasizes the need to take the results with caution as it limits the generalizability to the larger Flemish secondary school population. Finally, the present study was restricted to tests of difference and association, which limited the results to results that those tests could detect.

The limitations of the present study, as well as the limited existing research on language attitudes in multilingual contexts, lay bare a need for more systematic research on language attitudes and moderating variables in contexts with more than one foreign language, as well as on the interaction between cultural identity, language attitudes and self-rated L2 proficiency in multilingual contexts with different language communities. Future research can focus on L2 attitudes in the Flemish context, and in comparison with the French-speaking community in Belgium or even with other similar contexts such as Canada. Finally, future research should incorporate regression models to test the influence of moderating variables on the association between cultural identity, language attitudes, and self-rated L2 proficiency. In spite of the aforementioned limitations, the findings presented in this dissertation largely align with previous studies that show L2 attitudes are complex and language-specific.

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# APPENDIX A
# Online questionnaire

*Note: this was translated from Dutch into English*

## Examining the interaction between cultural identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Flemish students.

Research by Kadija Bouyzourn as part of a Master of Science in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition at the University of Oxford

Aim of the research: to explore the relationship between cultural identity, language attitudes and language proficiency of Flemish students.

The survey consists of the following four parts and takes about fifteen minutes to complete.

- Background

- Language skills

- Cultural identity

- Language Attitudes

CUREC approval ref: ED-CIA-21-218

**Information for participants**

Please read the following information carefully.

General Information

My name is Kadija Bouyzourn and I am a Master of Science student in the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. I invite you to participate in a research project that will form the basis of my Master's thesis. The research, which is supervised by Dr Robert Woore, explores the relationship between cultural identity, language attitudes and language proficiency of Flemish students.

I appreciate your interest in participating in this online survey. You have been invited because you are a Flemish secondary school student aged 16 years or older. Please read this information before agreeing to participate by ticking the boxes below. You can also ask me questions (kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk) before you decide to participate.

Participants complete an online survey about language skills, cultural identity and language attitudes. This takes about 15 minutes. No background knowledge is required. The data will be analysed and written up in a thesis and possibly in academic publications. In the interest of open science, other researchers working with me on future projects or publications may have access to the data, in anonymized form.

Am I obligated to participate?

No, participation is voluntary. If you prefer not to participate, you can leave the survey. If you decide to take it anyway, you can change your mind at any time by closing the browser window. All responses collected up to that point will be deleted. If you decide not to participate, you won't have to give a reason and there will be no consequences. This project is completely unrelated to your progress and grades in school. If you prefer not to answer a certain question, you can tick the box 'I prefer not to say'.

How will my data be used?

I will collect personal data, such as age, gender or language background. I will not ask your name and I will use ID numbers to store the data. As a result, my dataset and thesis of this project will be anonymous.

You will be asked to provide your email address if you wish to participate in a follow-up interview. The email addresses will be removed from the data and stored in a separate file, accessible only to me, with a key that links back to the survey responses. This is so that your survey responses can be further explored in the interviews. However, identifiable information (the email addresses) will be deleted once it is no longer needed for the research. I will include anonymous quotes or quotes with pseudonyms in my thesis. These cannot be traced back to you personally.

Your IP address will not be stored. We will take all possible steps to ensure that the data remains confidential. The responses you provide will be stored in a secure electronic file and may be used in academic publications. Research data (including consent files) will be retained for three years after publication or disclosure and then permanently and securely deleted.

Who has access to my data?

I have access to the data and my supervisor also has access to the anonymized data set as needed to support the analysis. Research is a task we perform in the public interest. Further information about your rights in relation to your personal data is available at https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

I would also like to get your permission to use the data in future studies and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Data will be anonymised before being shared with other researchers or results made public.

Who reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed and ethically approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford.

Who can I contact if I have a problem or want to make a complaint?

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this study, please contact me, Kadija Bouyzourn (kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Robert Woore (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your question. We will confirm your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be

dealt with. If you are still dissatisfied or wish to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) at the Oxford University Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY; email: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk. He will try to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

I sincerely hope you will participate in this survey which aims to shed light on language and identity in Flanders. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or remarks before, during or after the survey. I am available to answer all your questions and discuss any concerns you may have.

Thanks in advance for your participation!

Kind regards

Kadija Bouyzourn

# APPENDIX B

## Interview Questions

- What is your mother tongue?
- What is your home language?
- What is your parents' mother tongue?
- Why are these three categories not the same language for you? What do you think is the reason for that?
- Describe your language level for English and for French in your own words.
- Describe how confident you feel in the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in both languages?
- Why do you think your language level for English is higher than for French?
- Why are you more confident about your language level for English than for French?
- Why do you think the label [see box cultural identity multiple-choice] is the most appropriate for your cultural identity?
- Describe your cultural identity in your own words.
- What is the importance of cultural identity for you personally?
- What do you think is the link between your cultural identity and the languages you speak?
- Would you like to be multilingual? Why (not)?
- What do you think is the practical advantage of being multilingual?
- Why is it important to be multilingual (in Belgium)/(in Flanders)?
- Do you like learning languages at school? Why (not)?
- Do you enjoy learning languages in your spare time? Why (not)? How do you do it?
- Do you like French? Why not?
- Do you enjoy learning French? Why (not)?
- Do you find French a useful language? Why (not)?
- Are there advantages to learning French (in Belgium)? Why (not)?
- Do you enjoy the French lessons at school? Why (not)?
- In general, what are your thoughts on French as a foreign language?
- Do you like English as a language? Why (not)?
- Do you enjoy learning English? Why (not)?
- Do you find English a useful language? Why (not)?
- Are there advantages to learning English (in Belgium)? Why (not)?
- Do you enjoy your English lessons at school? Why (not)?
- In general, what are your thoughts on English as a foreign language?
- Is there anything you want to add to what we have discussed today?

# APPENDIX C

# CUREC Approval

Dear Kadija

Title: Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Flemish students

Ref: ED-CIA-21-218

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

If your research involves participants whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question (this includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults), then it is advisable to read the following NSPCC professional reporting requirements for cases of suspected abuse

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/factsheet-child-abuse-reporting-requirements-professionals.pdf

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to research.office@education.ox.ac.uk for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Best wishes

Hamish Chalmers

Member of the DREC

# APPENDIX D

## Formal Contact Email for Schools

*Note: this email was translated into Dutch.*

**Subject: Invitation to participate in a Master's research project at Oxford University**

Dear_____

My name is Kadija Bouyzourn and I'm an MSc student in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition at Oxford University Department of Education. For my Master's dissertation, I'm conducting research on Flemish secondary school students' social identity and language attitudes towards Arabic, Amazigh, French and English.

I'm looking for schools in Flanders (that follow the Flemish curriculum) that are willing to take part in the study. I will invite their students, aged 16 and older to participate in the research project which consists of the following parts:

1. an online questionnaire on:
    a. students' background,
    b. their social identity,
    c. their language attitudes,
2. for a small number of students who completed the questionnaire, an individual interview to discuss and elaborate on their responses.

Both the survey and interviews are optional and voluntary. I will conduct the research following strict ethical and professional guidelines. The research will be under the supervision of Dr. Robert Woore who is attached to the Department of Education of the University of Oxford.

I will request the head teacher's formal consent for this project. Participation is entirely voluntary. Students and their parents will be able to opt out of the questionnaire, and for those selected to take part in the interviews, their written consent will be obtained.

All identifiable information will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research and I will take all reasonable measures to ensure that data remain confidential. The research data and any write-ups based on the data I gather (including my MSc dissertation) will be anonymous.

If you are interested and would like more information, please don't hesitate to reach out to me on kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards

Kadija Bouyzourn

# APPENDIX E

## Participant Information Sheet for Schools

*Note: The letter was translated into Dutch.*

***Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Flemish students.***

***General Information***

My name is Kadija Bouyzourn, and I am an MSc student at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study which will form the basis of my MSc dissertation. The study, which is being supervised by Dr Robert Woore, aims to explore the relationship between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency in Flemish students.

I appreciate your interest in participating in an online survey as part of this study. You have been invited to participate as you are a secondary school student in Flanders aged 16 or above. Please read through this information before agreeing to participate (if you wish to) by ticking the boxes below. You may also ask any questions before deciding to take part by contacting the researcher.

Participants will complete an online survey on social identity and language attitudes. This should take about 30 minutes. No background knowledge is required. The data will be analysed and written up in a dissertation and possibly also in academic publications. In the interests of open science, other researchers who are collaborating with me on future projects or publications may be given access to the data, in anonymized form.

***Do I have to take part?***

No. Participation is voluntary. If you prefer not to take part, simply let me or your class teacher know. If you do decide to take part, you may subsequently withdraw at any point before submitting your answers by pressing the 'Exit' button or by closing the browser window. Any responses already gathered up until that point will be deleted. If you decide not to participate at any point, you don't need to give a reason and there will be no adverse consequences whatsoever. This project is completely unrelated to your progress and grades in school. A 'Prefer not to say' option is included for each set of questions, should you prefer not to answer a particular question.

***How will my data be used?***

I will collect data that could identify you, such as age, gender, place of recidence or ethnicity. I will not ask for your name and I will use ID numbers to store the data. Therefore, my dataset and the dissertation resulting from this project will be anonymous.

Note that you will be asked to provide your email address if you are interested in participating in a follow-up interview. The email addresses will be removed from the data and will be stored in a separate file, accessible only to me, with a key that links back to the survey responses. This is so that your survey responses can be further explored in the interviews. However, identifiable information (the email addresses) will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research. I will include anonymized quotations in my dissertation. These cannot be linked back to you personally.

Your IP address will not be stored. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that data remain confidential. The responses you provide will be stored in a password-protected electronic file and may be used in academic publications. Research data (including consent records) will be stored for three years after publication or public release and then will be permanently and securely deleted.

***Who will have access to my data?***

I will have access to the data and my supervisor will also have access to the anonymized dataset as required to support the analysis. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

I would also like your permission to use the data in future studies, and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Data will be de-identified before it is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

***Who has reviewed this study?***

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

***Who do I contact if I have a concern or I wish to complain?***

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to me, Kadija Bouyzourn (kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Robert Woore (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) at Oxford University Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY; email: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk. He will aim to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

I sincerely hope you will take part in this survey that aims to shine a light on language and identity in Flanders. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns before, during or after the survey. I'm available to answer all your questions and discuss any concerns you may have.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Kadija Bouyzourn

# APPENDIX F

## Headteacher Consent Form

*Note: this letter was translated into Dutch*

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel:+44(0)1865 274024
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk
www.education.ox.ac.uk

Dear Head Teacher,

Re consent to participate in Master's research project: Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Moroccan students.

Thank you for interest in my master's research project. This letter contains information on what the project involves, as well as more details on the ethical aspects. Please read the information in the letter below. If you are happy for me to conduct this study in your school, please email me (using your school email address) to indicate your consent for me to invite your students, aged 16 and older, to participate in the study. Both students and their parents will be able to opt out of the questionnaire, and for those selected to take part in the interview, their written consent will be obtained. I will make clear to students that their participation is entirely voluntary, that there are no negative consequences if they choose not to take part, and that therefore participation is entirely unconnected from their progress and grades in school.

*The project*

The research aims to explore the relationship between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency in Moroccan students aged 16 and older.

The students will be invited to complete an online survey on social identity and language attitudes, for which they will give their consent. This should take about 30 minutes. No background knowledge is required. I would be very grateful if you, or other school staff, could distribute the invitation to this survey to your eligible students.

A sub-sample of students who completed the survey, and who indicate that they are willing to participate in the interview stage, will be invited via email to take part in individual interviews. They will first give their consent and then an interview will be set up. They will be asked questions related to their responses in the survey, as well as a range of further questions on social identity and language attitudes. This should take about 45 minutes.

*Ethical considerations*

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures for research with teachers and young people, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. The following steps would be taken to ensure that the project is conducted according to the highest ethical standards:

- We will request your formal consent, as Head Teacher, before inviting your students to take part in the study.
- Parents or legal guardians will be given the option to opt-out if they do not want their child to complete the questionnaire. They will be asked to provide written consent for participation in the interviews.
- The main dataset will be anonymous, using ID numbers instead of participants' names. My dissertation and any other publications arising from this project will be completely anonymous.

- The interviewees' email addresses (which I will use to contact them in order to set up the interviews) will be removed from the main dataset and will be stored anonymously in a separate file with a key that links back to the survey responses, so that the responses can be further explored in the interviews.
- The interviews will be audiorecorded and transcribed. The survey responses will be linked to the interview responses and then the data will be anonymized in the analysis stage. I will only include anonymized quotations, which cannot be linked back to the participants personally, in my dissertation. All identifiable information will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research.
- I will take every precaution to ensure that data is kept strictly confidential. Electronic data will be held on a password-protected computer and on the University of Oxford Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business, accessible only to me via password-protected log-in. Anonymized data will be shared with my supervisor as necessary to support my analysis.
- The data will be analysed and written up in a dissertation and possibly also in other academic publications. Third party researchers who are collaborating with the researcher on future projects or publications may be given access to the data, but only in anonymized form.
- Following standard university procedures, electronic data will be retained for as long as they may be of value for analysis, and usually for three years after publication of the study's findings. After this, they will be permanently and securely deleted from the server.
- Data will not be used for any other purposes than those specified, without the further consent of all involved being obtained.

*Who do I contact if I have a concern or I wish to complain?*

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to me, Kadija Bouyzourn (kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Robert Woore (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) at Oxford University Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY; email: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk. He will aim to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

I sincerely hope that you are willing for your students to take part in this research project. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns before, during or after the interview. I'm available to answer all your questions and discuss any concerns you may have.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Yours sincerely,

Kadija Bouyzourn [SIGNATURE TO BE ADDED]

MSc student in Applied Linguistics and Second language Acquisition, Oxford University Department of Education

REPLY FORM – TO BE RETURNED TO ME BY EMAIL USING AN INSITUTIONAL EMAIL ADDRESS:

Re. research project: Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Moroccan students.

I confirm that I have read the information about this study and am happy to support this study being conducted with students from my school.

FULL NAME:

# APPENDIX G

## Opt-Out Forms for Parents

*Note: this letter was translated into Dutch.*

*Re. Research Project:* ***Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Flemish students.***

***General Information***

My name is Kadija Bouyzourn, and I am an MSc student at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. I am writing because I am inviting your son/daughter to participate in a study which will form the basis of my MSc dissertation. The study, which is being supervised by Dr Robert Woore, aims to explore the relationship between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency in Flemish students.

Your son/daughter has been invited to participate as s/he is a secondary school student in Flanders aged 16 or above. Please read through this information and decide whether or not you are happy for your son/daughter to take part. If you prefer not, please complete the opt-out form below, and return it to me (by email) or to your son/daughter's teacher. You may also ask any questions before deciding to take part by contacting me.

Participants will complete an online survey on social identity and language attitudes. This should take about 30 minutes. No background knowledge is required. The data will be analysed and written up in a dissertation and possibly also in academic publications. In the interests of open science, other researchers who are collaborating with me on future projects or publications may be given access to the data, in anonymized form.

***Does my son/daughter have to take part?***

No. Participation is voluntary. If you prefer for her / him not to take part, simply let me or your class teacher know. If they do decide to take part, they may subsequently withdraw at any point before submitting their answers, simply by pressing the 'Exit' button or by closing the browser window. Any responses already gathered up until that point will be deleted. If they decide not to participate at any point, they don't need to give a reason for this and there will be no adverse consequences whatsoever. This project is completely unrelated to their progress and grades in school. A 'Prefer not to say' option is included for each set of questions, should they prefer not to answer a particular question.

***How will my daughter's / son's data be used?***

I will collect data that could identify your daughter/ son, such as their age, gender, place of residence and ethnicity. I will not ask for their name and I will use ID numbers to store the data. Therefore, my dataset and the dissertation resulting from this project will be anonymous.

Note that your daughter/son will be asked to provide your email address if they are interested in participating in a follow-up interview. The email addresses will be removed from the data and will be stored in a separate file, accessible only to me, with a key that links back to the survey responses. This is so that their survey responses can be further explored in the interviews. However, identifiable information (the email addresses) will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research. I will include anonymized quotations in my dissertation. These cannot be linked back to any individual personally.

Your son/daughter's IP address will not be stored. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that data remain confidential. The responses they provide will be stored in a password-protected electronic file and may be used in academic publications. Research

data (including consent records) will be stored for three years after publication or public release and then will be permanently and securely deleted.

***Who will have access to my data?***

I will have access to the data and my supervisor will also have access to the anonymized dataset as required to support the analysis. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

I would also like to use the data in future studies, and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Data will be de-identified before it is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

***Who has reviewed this study?***

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

***Who do I contact if I have a concern or I wish to complain?***

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to me, Kadija Bouyzourn (kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Robert Woore (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) at Oxford University Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY; email: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk. He will aim to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

I sincerely hope you will take part in this survey that aims to shine a light on language and identity in Flanders. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns before, during or after the survey. I'm available to answer all your questions and discuss any concerns you may have.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Kadija Bouyzourn

PLEASE TICK THE CIRCLE BELOW IF YOU **DO NOT** WISH YOUR SON/DAUGHTER TO PARTICIPATE. If you're happy for her/him to take part, that is fine – no further action will be needed. If I do not hear back from your by [date to be added], I will assume that you are happy for your daughter/son to participate.

◯ I do **not** wish my daughter/son to complete the online questionnaire for this project.

STUDENT'S NAME

_____

YOUR NAME

_____

DATE

_____

# APPENDIX H

## Interview Participant Information Sheet with Parental and Participant Consent Form

*Note: this letter was translated into Dutch.*

***Research study: Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Flemish students.***

***General Information***

As you know, my name is Kadija Bouyzourn, and I am an MSc student at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. I am writing to invite your son/daughter to participate in the second part of my study, which will form the basis of my MSc dissertation. The study, which is being supervised by Dr Robert Woore, aims to explore the relationship between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency in Flemish students.

Thank you to your daughter/son for completing my online survey. I appreciate their interest in participating in a follow-up interview as well. Please read through this information before agreeing to their participation, if you wish to. You may ask any questions before deciding, by contacting me.

Participants will take part in individual interviews in which they will be asked questions related to their responses in the survey, as well as a range of further questions on social identity and language attitudes. This should take about 45 minutes. No background knowledge is required. The data will be analysed and written up in a dissertation and possibly in other academic publications. Third party researchers who are collaborating with the researcher on future projects or publications may be given access to the data, in anonymized form.

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***Does my daughter/son have to take part?***

No. Please note that participation is voluntary. If they do decide to take part, they may still withdraw at any point without needing to give a reason. Any interview responses already gathered up until that point will be deleted. They may choose to not reply to a particular question by replying 'I prefer not to say'. They don't need to give a reason and there will be no adverse consequences whatsoever if they prefer not to participate. This project is completely unrelated to their progress and grades in school.

***How will my data be used?***

In the interview, I will not ask for your name. Instead, your interview will be given an ID number linking it to your responses in the survey data. However, the interview will be audio recorded and your voice is potentially identifiable. I will therefore make a transcript of the interview (which will be fully anonymous) and once this is complete, I will permanently and securely delete the audio file. All data will be stored securely in password protected locations. All identifiable information will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research. With your permission, I will include anonymized quotations from the interviews in my dissertation. These cannot be linked back to you personally. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that data remain confidential. Following Oxford university policy, research data (including consent records) will be

stored for three years after publication or public release, then permanently and securely deleted.

***Who will have access to my data?***

I will have access to the data and my supervisor will also have access to the anonymized data as required to support the analysis. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

I would also like your permission to use the data in future studies, and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Data will be de-identified before it is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

***Who has reviewed this study?***

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

***Who do I contact if I have a concern or I wish to complain?***

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to me, Kadija Bouyzourn (kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Robert Woore (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) at Oxford University Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY; email: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk. He will aim to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

I sincerely hope you will take part in this interview that aims to shine a light on language and identity in Flanders. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns before, during or after the interview. I'm available to answer all your questions and discuss your concerns.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Kadija Bouyzourn

*Research study:* ***Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Moroccan students.***

Purpose of study: The research aims to explore the relationship between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency in Moroccan students

Please read the participant information as well as the participation consent statements below. If you agree with all of the statements, please copy and paste them into an email and send it to me at kadija.bouyzourn@education.ox.ac.uk. Alternatively, you may print the form and your son/daughter can give it to their class teacher.

If you have any questions about the research or the statements below, please do not hesitate to contact me.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the study 'Examining the interaction between social identity, language attitudes and language proficiency: the case of multilingual Moroccan students'. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, to ask questions and to have these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my son's/daughter's participation is voluntary and that they are free to opt out of the interview at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or penalty.
3. I understand what will happen to the data.
4. I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
5. I give the researcher(s) permission to interview my daughter/son.
6. I give the researcher permission to audio record my daughter/son.
7. I give permission for the researcher(s) to quote my daughter/son directly using a pseudonym or anonymously.
8. I agree for anonymized research data collected in this study to be used in other research studies.
9. I confirm that my son/daughter is 16 years of age or over and that s/he is a secondary school student in Morocco.
10. I have read the information above and in the attached information sheet, and agree to my son's/daughter's participation, with the understanding that the data (including any personal data) they submit will be processed accordingly.

◯ I agree with the statements above. I am happy for my daughter/son to take part in the interview for this project.

STUDENT'S NAME
_____

YOUR NAME _____

DATE _____

# APPENDIX I

## Semi-structured Interview Transcripts

*Note: this was translated from Dutch.*

Pupil ID: 66
Date: 10 August, 2021

**I'm going to ask you questions that are related to the survey you filled out and actually to expand and also to know what your motivation is behind certain answers in the survey. To start with, what is your mother tongue? Dutch. And your home language? Yes, also Dutch. And your parents' mother tongue? Dutch and Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh. And in which languages do you feel comfortable expressing yourself?**

Pupilid66: Dutch.

**And then we continue with English and French. Describe your language level for English and French in your own words. We will start with English.**

Pupilid66: I think that's the second best language I speak, because yes, that's also something, a language you hear much more often. I'm not the best at it, but I can express myself in English.

**So you can express yourself fluently in English?**

Pupilid66: Some words I have to think about, but when you answer questions like that, I can speak clearly and so on.

**And for French? How would you describe your language level for French?**

pupilid66: French a bit less, I think it is a bit less of a language subject. Well, I would like to speak it. So I do my best for it, but it is a lot less. I can't express myself very well in it.

**You have just described your language level for both languages. And what about your self-confidence? If you have to speak, read, write, listen in French and English? How confident do you feel in the four skills for both languages?**

pupilid66: In English, I feel more self-confident than in French. Yes, I think speaking in itself is ça va. I am not very happy in front of the class, so then I am usually nervous. For English or for French now? For both actually, but for French we haven't had to do that much yet, with corona now. As I said, I find French very difficult to express myself in speaking and writing. English is better.

**And what about reading and listening for both languages? Self-confidence then.**

Pupilid66: With French I am not at all self-confident when it comes to reading. I have to look up a lot of words when I read a book or something. English is getting better and better because I do it more, so that's progressing.

**Yes, and then listening?**

pupilid66: With French, I usually can't make out very much either. There are a few words that we've seen and had a basic understanding of, but apart from that not much. With English, I usually understand it.

**Yes, and why do you think your language level is higher for English than for French?**

pupilid66: Because English is also a subject, is a language you hear much more often than French. I personally also find French much harder than English from the tenses and the vocabulary and so on. French is the least of all my languages. I try my best but it's just not as good as my English. I wish I was fluent in it because I feel very embarrassed and nervous when I have to speak it.

**Yes, we will continue with cultural identity. You chose Flemish-Belgian, first Flemish and then Belgian. Why did you choose that label? Why is that the most appropriate for your cultural identity?**

pupilid66: Because in Flanders they mainly speak Dutch and that is the language I speak best. Belgium is a bit wider, because I live there and I also learn German and French and so on in those languages and that's what is spoken in Belgium.

**So now your cultural identity, the label Flemish Belgian, first Flemish, then Belgian is linked to your languages for you? Yes. And in the cultural identity where you were allowed to add your own description, you wrote Flemish. Describe what this cultural identity means to you.**

Pupilid66: Not really for English. And French, I think, is a part of my cultural identity, but mostly the Belgian and Moroccan part, of course, because we live in a bilingual country and that's part of it. Even though I am not fluent in French, I understand it better than someone who went to school in Portugal, for example, because I am Belgian and Moroccan. I grew up in a Moroccan family.

**Yes, and what is the importance of this cultural identity for you personally?**

pupilid66: When you speak a language, I think you take something with you from those cultures, which also has an influence on your cultural identity.

**We have already talked about language and identity and you have made the link there. What I want to know is how do you see this link between your cultural identity and the languages you speak? Because you gave the description Flemish there and then you also chose the label Flemish, Belgian, first Flemish, then Belgian. How does your cultural identity link to the languages you speak?**

Pupilid66: Yes, I think the language you learn in school and which you speak also has a lot to do with cultural integrity because, as I said, you can do better there and you feel more at ease there. And I think that also has more to do with what that makes your identity if you feel at home there.

**Dutch is strongly linked to the Flemish identity, because that is your mother tongue. And what about English and French? Are those also linked to your identity or not?**

pupilid66: I think much less so. But yes, if you speak that language, you also get to know people in other ways. And I think that if you learn something about those cultures, it also has an influence on your cultural identity.

**And when it comes to your Flemish or your Flemish-Belgian identity, do you think there is an explicit link with French or English or not?**

pupilid66: No, I don't think so.

**Ok, let's continue with some questions about multilingualism. Do you consider yourself multilingual?**

Pupilid66: Yes, because I do learn several languages. But I'm not great in all of them yet, but if I can express myself in English, then I think I can be considered multilingual.

**So you consider yourself multilingual, Dutch, English or Dutch, English and French?**

Pupilid66: Mainly Dutch, English, Moroccan, but I hope that French, Spanish and German will be added.

**What do you think is the practical benefit of being multilingual?**

pupilid66: I think it's especially useful when you travel or meet new people. That you can express yourself and have a decent conversation with each other.

**Is there any practical use in Belgium or in Flanders for multilingualism?**

Pupilid66: Yes, in some things, I think, because if, for example, you don't speak French well and you go to an area in Belgium where French speakers speak, then you also have the option of English if you speak both. That can come in handy for things like that, so I think it's useful in Belgium.

**So when it comes to being multilingual, it is especially useful to speak English as a second language in Belgium?**

Pupilid66: If you can speak French or German the better, I think, because that is more spoken than English in Belgium. But if you look at it this way, I think English is one of the languages which is spoken a lot as a second or first language. So I think that comes in handy more often.

**Do you think it is important to be multilingual in Belgium? Is that important?**

pupilid66: Not necessarily. I just think it can be useful.

**Same for Flanders then?**

Pupilid66: Yes, I think so.

**So for Belgium it's not important to speak French? Or to speak both French and Dutch?**

Pupilid66: I don't think that's necessary, but if you want to go further in Belgium and discover more and meet other people, I think it's nice if you can, because otherwise it's difficult.

**Now and then we continue with language learning. Do you like learning languages at school?**

Pupilid66: Yes, actually. Some a bit less than others, but mostly yes.

**What do you like about it? Or why do you like it?**

Pupilid66: Yes, I like to learn a language so that you can speak it eventually and express yourself better. And some teachers teach that really well. So if it's taught in a fun way, you're more interested in learning it yourself.

**And what about learning languages in your spare time? Is that something you enjoy or not?**

pupild66: Yes, learning is something I think not very many people like to do, but I am willing to do it. If you can do something with it later on,

**Do you do that yourself in your spare time?**

Pupilid66: You mean learning languages? At school anyway, not really learning languages I think, but watching series or films or other things to learn the other languages like French and English.

**So you are busy with languages in terms of culture, media, film, TV and so on. Are there any other things you do related to languages in your spare time besides TV and film?**

Pupilid66: I do sometimes read in another language and we sometimes speak it at home to improve my French and English, but not much else.

**And when it comes to those films and series and books, is that in both French and English or mainly English or mainly French?**

Pupilid66: Mostly English, but sometimes French and Spanish and stuff.

**We'll focus on French then. Is French a language you like?**

pupilid66: Yes, I think it sounds beautiful.

**And what exactly do you like about it?**

Pupilid66: The way it sounds, when you hear someone talking who is really good at it, then it sounds very nice to me.

**Is French a language you enjoy learning? Learning in the broad sense of the word, so not only learning at school, but also just being busy with the French language. Is that something you like?**

pupilid66: Not really no.

**Why not?**

pupilid66: I honestly find that a very difficult language. And yes, I can't express myself very well in it. So then I don't like doing that very much because I'm not very good at it.

**And what exactly do you experience as difficult in the language?**

pupilid66: Remembering the different times when to use what. And yes, expressing yourself in it as well, so actually remembering all the phrases and words and stuff. What does what mean? That's what I find hardest.

**So do you find French a useful language to speak or to learn?**

Pupilid66: I think something, I do find it less useful than English, but I do think it is useful since we live quite close to France. And in Belgium we also speak French. So that's possible. I think it's quite handy if you can do that.

**So, yes. What advantages do you have if you learn French? Or are there no advantages in Belgium?**

Pupilid66: Yes, I think there are advantages, because then you can better express yourself towards people in Wallonia for example. Or people you meet who speak French, because there are quite a few people here in Belgium who speak French, so...

**Do you enjoy the French lessons at school?**

Pupilid66: Yes, but it also depends a bit on the lesson, on what we learn during the lesson. But I find that one of the least fun languages to learn in class.

**And what exactly does it depend on? What things do you like? What things do you dislike?**

Pupil66: Yes, it also depends a bit on how the teacher gives the lesson? But yes, sometimes we do a lot of theory in a lesson and I find that less pleasant. That's an hour of paying very close attention and then you often have several hours that are like that, so then the day is quite heavy.

**And then in general. What do you think about French as a foreign language? Just your opinion about French as a foreign language. Ugh, what do you think of that? How? What are your thoughts, feelings about that language?**

Pupilid66: I think it's a beautiful language and I would like to be able to speak it, but I also think it's a very difficult language.

**Ok, and then basically the same questions for English. Do you think English is a beautiful language?**

pupilid66: Yes, I do think it is a beautiful language.

**And what do you like about it?**

pupilid66: I like the fact that you can express yourself in it quite easily, I think. And it sounds so beautiful when you hear it. Maybe I have that with all languages that I like the sound of.

**What do you think sounds beautiful in English?**

Pupilid66: The way they pronounce it, you also have this expression which we don't have in Belgium. And that's really funny how they say some things and stuff.

**Do you like learning English? And why?**

pupilid66: Yes, actually I do. I find it a reasonably easy language to learn, especially if you know the tenses, then you know the basics and you can start expanding your vocabulary.

**Do you find English a useful language? And why?**

pupilid66: Yes, a very useful language. Because it is a language that is spoken a lot in the world. So that will certainly come in handy if you go somewhere else or something.

**Yes, and when it comes to going somewhere else, English is useful. But are there any advantages to learning English in Belgium?**

pupilid66: Uhm, yes, I think so, because there are also non-native speakers in our country, not only French and German, but also people who only know English and are learning our language, for example. Then it is also nice that they can sometimes speak the language they do know. English is a very universal language so most people know it.

**And do you like the English lessons at school? And why?**

Pupilid66: Yes, actually. We had a very good teacher teaching there last year so that always makes it so much more enjoyable.

**And then just like French, what are your thoughts on English in general?**

pupilid66: That that is actually a language I would definitely recommend learning because you can get far with it.

**If I ask you French in Belgium is more important than English or still English more important than French if we only look at Belgium?**

Pupilid66: I think French may have been more important in the past, but not really anymore. Yes, many people still speak it, but I think English is more of a language they would use if they wanted to communicate with someone who doesn't have the same mother tongue.

**Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have discussed today?**

Pupilid66: Just, I wanted to say something about language sense. I think you get a kind of language awareness from language learning. And that language feeling helps, because learning French makes it easier to learn English and vice versa. It is now quite easy to take a new language and try to see what the important points of the grammar are, and to understand it as quickly as possible. So I think a language opens a lot of new doors.

**Great! I thank you for your time and for your participation. I am going to stop the recording in a moment.**