HOW MIXED UP ARE ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS?

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking about possible restrictions on access to certain government services, the province's Immigration and Francization and Integration Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette said that services in the English language would be limited to members of the "historic English minority". This reference gave rise to much debate as to the definition and possible criteria for so-called historic English Quebecers.

In the National Assembly, one MNA asked if Jolin-Barrette was referring to English-speaking Quebecers born in Quebec and/or English-speaking Canadians born in other provinces? Would English-speaking Quebecers need an identification card or a personal identification number to interact in English when securing some government services?

Not surprisingly, the Minister refused to elaborate, but he added that any limits to the offer of service in English would not "undermine the rights of Anglophones in Quebec..." Ironically the ensuing controversy contributed to the ongoing conversation over the criteria used by governments and community organizations to determine the numbers of English-speaking Quebecers as well as the underlying considerations that drive their choice(s).

Calculating the number of Quebecers on the basis of their language background(s) can have a bearing on the estimated numbers of French speakers as well as on the 'others' – that is persons whose first language is neither English nor French and/or speak a non-official language most often in their homes. That is because, depending on the selected criteria for some observers, one more or one less English-speaking Quebecer may mean one more or one less Francophone or Allophone. Dual and multiple choices make the calculation all the more challenging. That which follows will briefly review the sources and methods employed to assess the numbers of Quebec English speakers and focus on the distribution of dual and multiple language identifiers. It is contended that over the years Statistics Canada may be underestimating such responses in the effort assign such persons to one and/or the other language group.

ESTIMATING ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS?

In Canada, the estimated numbers of members of minority official language communities is generally collected via the census questions on language knowledge and/or language use. Where people identify with more than one language group, the census authorities generally distribute them equally between the two official language communities. Sometimes the final tally is influenced by political rather than sociological considerations (though the two are not unrelated).

The number that is ultimately established can be especially important to Canada's official language minorities as it helps government estimate the required level of services. The fed-

eral government has a legislative commitment to support the vitality of official language minorities and therefore needs to know the numbers of Francophones/French speakers outside of Quebec and Anglophones/English speakers in the province as well as in regions within it. The province also provides services to English speakers but at times its commitment to do so is presented as an expression of good will rather than a legislative obligation.

As much as possible the census of Canada language questions attempt to situate respondents within the single box in which they best fit via questions on mother tongue (language first learned and still understood) and the language spoken most often at home. In his 1967 book, Languages in Conflict, Richard Joy collects information on language and ethnic origin in documenting the evolution of language communities within and outside of Quebec. Joy noted that "...During the past hundred years, there has been a great change in the linguistic composition of Quebec. No longer is English the only language heard in the Eastern Townships and the Ottawa Valley. No longer are English-speaking citizens in the majority at Montreal, as they were until 1865, and the few still to be found at Quebec City, give no indication of the pre-Confederation strength of the English language in La Veille Capitale."

ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS IN THE MIX

Things seemed much simpler at the time that Joy published his seminal work, as more limited degrees of mixing between the two language groups made for fewer people that identified as dual and/or multiple -in other words fewer people saying that they were English and/or French and/or other. But that has changed considerably in large measure owing to the substantial increase in rates of bilingualism amongst Quebec Anglophones, Francophones and persons whose first language is neither English nor French, commonly referred to as Allophones.

The rise in bilingualism meant a reduction in social barriers and heightened opportunities for interaction between language groups. To be fair, prior to the 1960s, that has often been characterized as the prevalent era for the two language solitudes, there was still some degree of mixing even where language barriers were compounded by religious ones. A popular generalization at that time equated being Protestant with being English and Catholic with being French. In line with that generalization, when French-speaking Jews first arrived from North Africa in the later 1960s, some thought of them as "Catholic" Jews.

Since then, language mixing has increased substantially, and is reflected in various ways. As observed below, more than one in four Montrealers with English as mother tongue are married to Francophones. In Quebec City the majority of persons with English mother tongue are married to Francophones.

A 2018 survey conducted by Léger Marketing reveals that some three in four English Quebecers often and sometimes interact with French-speaking friends, as do a majority in their workplace setting.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS GETTING OUT OF THE BOX

Looking at the census results prior to looking at these other questions, it might be assumed that there are at least seven possible responses (English, French, Other, English and French, English and other, French and other and English, French and other). In fact, there are only three responses

TABLE 1: THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE (IN BRACKETS) OF ENGLISH MOTHER TONGUE QUEBECERS MARRIED OR WITH A COMMON-LAW PARTNER THAT IS ENGLISH, FRENCH OR OTHER MOTHER TONGUE IN MONTREAL, QUEBEC CITY AND SHERBROOKE, 2016

English Mother tongue – Quebec 2016	Total – Mother tongue of married spouse or common-law partner	English	French	Other/ Allophone
Montreal	87,700	53,485 (62%)	21,965 (26%)	10,525 (12%)
Quebec City	3,850	1,550 (41%)	2,140 (55%)	135 (4%)
Sherbrooke	2,605	1,405 (54%)	1,095 (43%)	80 (3%)

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada 2016

TABLE 2: PERSONS WITH ENGLISH MOTHER TONGUE THAT OFTEN, SOMETIMES, RARELY OR NEVER HAVE CONTACT WITH QUEBECERS WHO SPEAK FRENCH AT WORK, SCHOOL OR WITH FRIENDS

English	Do you often, sometimes, rarely or never have contact with Quebecers who speak French		
	At work	At school	With friends
Often	44.30%	17.2%	45.8%
Sometimes	17.2%	8.9%	30.2%
Rarely	7.3%	5.2%	17.2%
Never	1.6%	6.3%	6.8%
Does not apply	29.7%	62.5%	–
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Léger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies and the Quebec Community Groups Network, May 2018

respectively listed below the questions on mother tongue and language spoken at home. The numbers of dual and/or multiple respondents arise from those respondents that determine that they can't be defined by one of the three options provided.

Statistics Canada may legitimately argue that the question does not prevent respondents from checking more than one box. On the other hand, it doesn't encourage them to do so. This could be done by adding a statement to the questions on mother tongue (MT) or language spoken most often at home (LSH), such as "specify as many origins [responses] as applicable" (a formulation used in the census question on ethnic origins). Doing this is not without its own set of challenges as regards establishing the number of persons that identify with language group(s) but it may nonetheless permit respondents to more accurately reflect their situation(s). It's also true that as thing currently stand, the census results on language give rise to a large variation in the estimated number of those who qualify as English Quebecers.

Below one observes that across the spectrum in Quebec in 2016, from the single declaration of English mother tongue to the derived variable first official language spoken (FOLS) English, there is a difference of over 350 000 persons. The difference between mother tongue English and FOLS rises to about 500 000, when those counted as FOLS English and French (275630) are divided equally between French and English groups, thus bringing the total of the English group to nearly 1.1 million (960 110 plus 137 815) FOLS English).

As noted below, the FOLS category which is used by minority language community organizations and by the federal government is not a census question but a derived variable. The FOLS figure is arrived at by taking the English mother tongue number plus:

- Allophones that report they speak English only;
- half of those declaring knowledge of English and French among those with a non-official mother tongue;
- half of those declaring both English and French mother tongue;
- persons declaring English and Non-Official language and;
- half of those declaring English, French and a non-official language as mother tongue.

The net effect of this calculation is to reduce to population of neither English nor French mother tongue – the Allophones – to 1%.

TABLE 3: NUMBERS OF PERSONS WITH ENGLISH MOTHER TONGUE (MT), LANGUAGE SPOKEN MOST OFTEN AT HOME (LSH) AND FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN (FOLS) IN QUEBEC PROVINCE, MONTREAL AND THE REST OF QUEBEC, 2016

English 2016	Quebec			Montreal			Rest of Quebec		
	MT	LSH	FOLS	MT	LSH	FOLS	MT	LSH	FOLS
	598,050	709,410	960,110	443,950	619,760	764,240	154,100	89,650	195,870

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada 2016

But the FOLS method is driven by the idea that it is imperative to find out which of the two official language boxes Quebecers ultimately fit in. The federal legislative commitment to support official language minority vitality makes it important to identify all those who might need services in the minority language. But the use of FOLS raises the issue of whether those persons whose first language is neither English nor French can truly be regarded as belonging to the English speaking and/or French-speaking groups, and whether the equal distribution of dual identifiers accurately reflects the group which they identify?

Looking at the FOLS categories on the basis of the languages spoken most often at home, provides some interesting insights. As seen in Table 4 of the 960 110 FOLS English, some 52 145 speak French most often at home (inversely some 71 340 FOLS Francophones spoke English most often at home). As further noted, the vast majority of those who are classified as both English and French speak a non-official language most often at home.

DIFFERENT CRITERIA, DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

Depending on the criteria that is selected, the English-speaking group will display very different characteristics. In effect, much of the difference in the 500,000 mother tongue English speakers and the FOLS English population, is attributable to the number of immigrants that fall within the latter category. In Table 5 it's seen that the percentage of immigrants in the English FOLS category (28%) is considerably greater than the share of immigrants that are part of the mother tongue English-speaking group (12%). And over the period 2011-2016, there would be more than four times the number of English-speakers with the FOLS criteria as opposed to that of mother tongue.

CONCLUSION: THE RISE OF THE 'FRENGLISH' QUEBEC?

Census numbers on language origin tell us something about respondents' identification based on the criteria that is provided with questions. As identities are often constructed, there is an important complexity that can be difficult to ascertain. The single boxes that are deemed essential for language policies and planning may not capture the nuances that arise from interaction across language groups and mixing. There is a pervasive zero-sum when it comes to individual language choices and it suggests that, in Quebec and elsewhere, you're ultimately English or French. Dual and multiple language identifiers represent a challenge to this vision. A survey conducted in fall 2019 by the firm Léger for the Association for

TABLE 4: CROSS-TABULATION BETWEEN PERSONS WITH FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE SPOKEN MOST OFTEN AT HOME, SINGLE AND MULTIPLE RESPONSES, 2016

Quebec 2016	Total – First Official Language Spoken	English	French	English and French	Neither English nor French
Total – Language spoken most often at home	7,965,455	960,110	6,657,465	275,630	72,250
English	780,750	709,410	71,340	0	0
French	6,283,305	52,145	6,231,165	0	0
Non-official language	588,890	126,620	1,72,325	217,690	72,255
English and French	82,940	14,705	36,530	31,695	0
English and non-official language	53,420	52,630	790	0	0
French and non-official language	137,280	855	136,430	0	0
English, French and non-official language	38,870	3,750	8,880	26,235	0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada 2016

Canadian Studies and the Quebec Community Groups Network reveals that some one in four mother tongue English-speaking Quebecers identify as equally English and French while some 7% of persons whose mother tongue is French consider themselves equally English and French.

The net effect of such mixing implies that there are perhaps more dual than single identifiers in what are counted as the English group. And the figures for the mother tongue English population outside of Montreal suggest that a majority of the group define themselves as partly French. For some analysts, how they define themselves linguistically is less pertinent, given the need to situate them in one category for purposes of determining how services and community resources are allocated. Nonetheless, the vastly underestimated number and percentage of mixed linguistic persons in Quebec, are most certainly real and need more attention in determining how best to situate them in language policy, planning and politics.

TABLE 5: ENGLISH MOTHER TONGUE, LANGUAGE SPOKEN MOST OFTEN AT HOME AND FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME, IMMIGRANT STATUS AND ENTRANTS OVER THE PERIOD 2011-2016

Quebec 2016 – English only	Mother Tongue	Language, spoken most often at home	First Official Language Spoken
Total – Immigrant status and period of immigration 2011-2016	598,050	709,410	960,110
Non-immigrants	518,310	554,710	660,570
Immigrants	71,760 (12%)	140,925 (20%)	270,005 (28%)
2011 à 2016	9,075	1, 995	39,635

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada 2016

TABLE 6: "WHEN THINKING ABOUT MY LANGUAGE IDENTITY(IES) I CONSIDER MYSELF" AMONG MOTHER TONGUE ENGLISH AND FRENCH QUEBECERS

	French	English
NET ENGLISH	**2%**	**71%**
English only	1%	32%
English mostly and partly French	1%	39%
Equally English and French	7%	25%
NET FRENCH	**91%**	**4%**
French mostly and partly English	36%	4%
French only	55%	0%

Source: Léger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies and the Quebec Community Groups Network, May 2018