Exploring speech expectations during the hiring process and perceived accent discrimination in the workplace: Outcomes for L2 French job applicants and employees in Québec

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Abstract

Exploring speech expectations during the hiring process and perceived accent discrimination in the workplace: Outcomes for L2 French job applicants and employees in Québec

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Because people often infer a person's personal and professional characteristics such as intelligence and competence from that person's accent, employers, colleagues, or customers may react negatively toward speakers who display second language (L2) speech, which can be detrimental to those speakers' chances of obtaining a job, their prospects of job advancement, and their sense of belonging to their workplace community. However, the majority of research on accent bias in the workplace focuses on L2 English accents and relies on first-impression listener judgments. This dissertation addresses these shortcomings by providing a comprehensive listener- and speaker-focused perspective through two complementary studies that explore how L2 French speakers are evaluated during extended job interviews and how L2 French speakers experience workplace accent discrimination in Québec.

Study 1 explored whether L1 French listeners' evaluations of L1 and L2 French-speaking job applicants would differ under various expectation conditions (congruent, incongruent, no-expectancy). A typical interview process was emulated by presenting 55 HR-experienced listeners first with job applicants' resumes, then with audio-recorded interview excerpts, which captured how employability evaluations and speech perception might evolve dynamically throughout the interview process. The L2 applicants were perceived as less employable than the L1 applicants. When an applicant was presumed to be an L2 speaker based on her resume, her employability was subsequently upgraded when she spoke L1 French. Lower employability

evaluations of L2 applicants were related to their accent being perceived as less prestigious and more difficult to understand than expected.

Study 2 investigated perceived accent discrimination and its possible consequences from the perspective of 60 L2 French-speaking employees. Participants provided anecdotes and responded to surveys about how they are treated at work due to their French accent and how willing they are to engage in certain work interactions. Having more frequent experiences with accent discrimination in the workplace was associated with employees avoiding taking on leadership roles, participating at meetings, and applying to certain jobs. Common stereotypes mentioned by employees were being labeled as foreigners, perceived as incompetent and unwilling to learn French, and identified as a threat to the survival of French in Québec.

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Contribution of Authors

The two studies in this dissertation are co-authored with my supervisor, Dr. Pavel Trofimovich. Study 2 has been presented at two international conferences (Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching; Association for Canadian Studies in the United States), and Study 1 has been presented at an international conference (American Association for Applied Linguistics). Both manuscripts are being prepared for journal submission.

CRediT author statement (Study 1) – Rachael Lindberg: conceptualization; methodology; investigation; formal analysis; visualization; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. Pavel Trofimovich: conceptualization (supporting); methodology (supporting); formal analysis (supporting); writing – review and editing (supporting); funding acquisition; supervision.

CRediT author statement (Study 2) – Rachael Lindberg: conceptualization; methodology; investigation; formal analysis; visualization; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. Pavel Trofimovich: conceptualization (supporting); methodology (supporting); formal analysis (supporting); writing – review and editing (supporting); funding acquisition; supervision.

Both authors reviewed the final manuscript and approved the contents.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Definitions of Key Terms

Accent bias: Beliefs or attitudes (typically negative) about a particular way of speaking (i.e., certain pronunciation features, such as those associated with minority groups, a particular geographic region, or second language speakers) that often lead to listeners displaying irritation or prejudice toward individuals who speak in that way. Accent bias can often lead to negative predispositions about someone's personality or competence (Wang et al., 2013).

Accent discrimination: When speakers encounter prejudice or negative attitudes due to their particular pronunciation features (influenced by their regional, ethnic, or linguistic background) that deviate from the perceived standard or norm (Lippi-Green, 1997).

Accent prestige: How prestigious or standard an accent is perceived to be. Prestigious or standard language varieties typically include those that are more prevalent in media and are associated with higher socioeconomic status (Giles & Billings, 2004), such as Parisian French, British Received Pronunciation, or Standard American English (Edwards & Jacobsen, 1987). However, in this dissertation, prestige is not assigned to a particular accent, but is based on listeners' own perceptions of what they consider to be prestigious and the standard. In this dissertation, the terms 'prestigious' and 'standard' therefore may be used interchangeably as one's perception of accent prestige is measured in relation to what they deem the standard to be.

Accentedness: The degree to which a speaker's pronunciation features (e.g., vowel articulation, intonation, word stress) differ from the expected language variety, which could be either the listeners' own variety or the one they consider to be the standard or norm. When speaking in a second language, a speaker's previously learned language(s) often influence these pronunciation features, contributing to the accentedness of their second language speech (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

Allophones: This is a term used in Québec for individuals residing in Québec whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. This does not, however, include the First Nations (Kircher, 2012).

Bias: Conscious or unconscious beliefs or attitudes (typically negative) about others that are based on worldviews or stereotypes, therefore deviating from an accurate, objective perspective, that lead toward a particular judgment. This often results in unfair treatment of individuals (Derous & Ryan, 2019).

Comprehensibility: A subjective measure of the difficulty a listener experiences when processing speech (Nagle et al., 2023). High comprehensibility represents speech where the listener experiences little to no difficulty in understanding, whereas low comprehensibility represents speech where the listener experiences substantial to severe difficulty in understanding.

Discrimination: Unfair or prejudicial treatment of an individual based on their personal characteristics, such as their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, or marital status (Munro, 2003), rather than on their merit or qualifications.

Expectation of devaluation: An individual's anticipation or belief that they will be treated differently or unfairly. For example, if a second language speaker believes their accent is stigmatized, they might expect to be devalued due to their way of speaking (Freynet et al., 2018).

Language attitudes: Evaluative reactions to different accents or language varieties, typically along the dimensions of status (e.g., intelligence, competence) and solidarity (e.g., friendliness, trustworthiness) (Dragojevic et al., 2017).

Perceived discrimination: The subjective interpretation of experiencing discrimination, such as when an individual perceives themselves as the target of discrimination because they are mistreated or disadvantaged (Schmitt et al., 2014).

Speech expectation: Prior to hearing a speaker speak, the anticipation or belief that a speaker will sound a certain way, based on either past encounters or social norms (Burgoon, 1993).

Stereotypes: Universal generalizations about a social group or expectations that one makes about a person based on their group membership (e.g., immigrants take away jobs, foreigners are loud). Informed by social categories, these assumptions can lead to implicit or explicit bias because stereotyping discourages people from treating others as individuals (Beeghly, 2015).

Stereotype threat: When an individual is worried about being judged negatively on the basis of a stereotype about their group that may be present in a certain situation (Spencer et al., 2016).

Stigma consciousness: The extent to which individuals focus on their stereotyped status (Pinel & Paulin, 2005) and expect to be stereotyped by others (Pinel, 1999). The stereotyped status referred to in this dissertation is individuals' status as an L2 speaker of French.

Chapter 1: General Introduction

Background

In various social contexts, language variation is often viewed negatively, particularly when a speaker's speech deviates from what the listener considers to be the standard variety (Giles & Billings, 2004; Giles & Edwards, 2010; Barrett et al., 2023). For example, although second language (L2) speakers may be viewed more positively in terms of solidarity traits, which refer to such characteristics as friendliness and loyalty, they are typically viewed less favorably across various dimensions of status (e.g., intelligence, competence, education) in comparison to first language (L1) speakers (Dragojevic et al., 2013; Fraser & Kelly, 2012; Hu & Lindemann, 2009). As such, when listeners engage in linguistic stereotyping, which generally refers to listeners ascribing various judgments to speakers based on their speech patterns or accents, their attitudes may positively, but more often negatively, impact their evaluations of those speakers' interpersonal attributes (e.g., Fuertes et al., 2002; Kircher, 2012), credibility (e.g., Dixon & Mahoney, 2004; Elliott & Leach, 2016; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010), and competence (e.g., Hume et al., 1993).

Theories Explaining Listeners' Judgments of L2 Speech

Because a person's speech is one of the most robust cues of one's ethnic or social identity (Giles & Johnson, 1987), it plays an essential role in impression formation of speakers (Hansen et al., 2017a; Rakić et al., 2011). Researchers across disciplines have therefore developed various theories to explain listeners' social evaluations in the presence of L2 speech. For instance, individuals, even children, may express preference for speakers who speak a language variety similar to their own or that which they are most accustomed to hearing (Ahn & Kang, 2017; Kinzler et al., 2007; Zhang & Hu, 2008). Alternatively, from a stereotype perspective, listeners

may engage in social categorization (associating specific speech patterns with a particular social group), subsequently ascribing a certain level of status or competence to the speaker, informed solely by the stereotypes they attribute to that social group (e.g., Cargile, 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998; Singer & Eder, 1989). In addition, people often form erroneous explanations for another's accent, which can then drive their perceptions of that person (e.g., Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Dragojevic et al., 2017; Ybarra, 2002). To illustrate, if a listener holds the belief that accents are controllable in the sense that they can be easily changed or replaced, they may interpret a speaker's strong L2 accent, which refers to various pronunciation features (e.g., vowel articulation, stress, intonation) that highlight that speaker's ethnic, racial, or geographic origin (Derwing & Munro, 2015), as their unwillingness to change their speech (Dragojevic et al., 2019). As such, stronger accents deviating from the expected or standard speech patterns can be associated with an inability to communicate, low intelligence, or low social status (Fuertes et al., 2012; Matsuda, 1991), and these misconceptions and stereotypes can then influence a listener's negative reactions toward L2 speakers.

A listener's judgment of an L2 speaker can also be explained by the expectation violation theory (Burgoon & Jones, 1976; Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005), which posits that individuals' attitudes drive their social behavior when there is a mismatch between their social expectations based on stereotypes (e.g., imagined speech typical of a certain group) and reality (e.g., actual speech). For example, if a listener is expecting to hear L1 speech, but then hears an L2 accent, that speaker will be downgraded more severely than in a situation where their L2 accent was expected (Hansen et al., 2017a, 2018). Lastly, there is also a processing-focused explanation of listeners' reactions to L2 speech, which suggests that negative evaluations are more likely to occur when listeners experience greater difficulty processing a

speaker's speech (Dragojevic et al., 2017), where more effortful listener experience (e.g., in terms of the difficulty in deciphering the speaker's intended message) typically leads to less favorable evaluations of credibility, intelligence, and likeability (e.g., Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009; Oppenheimer, 2006; Reber et al., 1998; Reber & Schwarz, 1999). Therefore, according to this principle, bias toward L2 speakers may be due to listeners' struggle to decode L2 speech, irrespective of individual- or group-focused stereotypes that they might hold (e.g., Dragojevic & Giles, 2016, 2017; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010).

Speech-Based Biases in the Workplace

Regardless of which underlying process may best explain listeners' judgments, a substantial amount of literature on language attitudes primarily focuses on capturing listeners' perceptions and biases toward speakers of regional, nonstandard, or L2 varieties (e.g., Cargile & Giles, 1998; Edwards, 1977; Fuertes et al., 2012; Holmes et al., 2001; Kircher, 2012), while there is less research dedicated to understanding how listeners' attitudes can impact their decision-making among other behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Kaiser et al., 2010). Research that does consider behavioral reactions to speech has shown how speech-based biases have far-reaching implications for speakers in many social situations that involve listeners' decision-making. Indeed, when speakers display speech that does not conform to the dominant or expected language variety, they may face consequences in terms of their access to housing, education, or employment opportunities (e.g., Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Hopper & Williams, 1973; Kalin, 1982; Matsuda, 1991; Munro, 2003; Purnell et al., 1999; Rakić et al., 2011).

In particular, speech-engendered biases have been widely studied within the context of workplace communication due to the role they play in one's job prospects and advancement (e.g., Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Hopper & Williams, 1973; Rakić et al., 2011). For example,

employers typically express more favorable judgments toward L1 candidates compared to L2 speakers when it comes to hiring recommendations (e.g., Hansen et al., 2017a; Hosoda et al., 2012; Roessel et al., 2019). Beyond job selection, speech-based biases are also relevant to social evaluations in other areas of workplace communication, such as performance reviews, client satisfaction, or social relations with colleagues (Harrison, 2013; Telford, 2016; van Vaerenbergh & Holmqvist, 2013). From a processing perspective, it could be argued that hiring preferences for L1 speakers are largely functional in nature, where an accent that is hard to understand might impede communication, which could be an important demand of the job. This perspective could become problematic, however, as individuals can also use this justification (possibly unconsciously) to rationalize their otherwise biased decision-making (Roessel et al., 2020; Spence et al., 2022). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of 27 studies on accent bias in the workplace revealed that comprehensibility, which is a common measure of listeners' processing effort in understanding a speaker, did not moderate hiring decisions, suggesting that listeners' preference for L1 over L2 speakers in the workplace reflects various forms of biased decision-making rather than speech processing difficulty (Spence et al., 2022).

In addition to the traditional approach of examining workplace bias through listener judgments, it would also be beneficial to consider the speaker's perspective. As previously mentioned, when hearing speakers of a regional, nonstandard, or L2 variety, listeners tend to readily categorize them as belonging to a certain social group (i.e., based on ethnicity or social class) or to a particular geographical region, then ascribe certain stereotypic traits to those speakers based on this categorization (e.g., Kinzler et al., 2010; Rakić et al., 2011). However, we currently know little about speakers' awareness of the stereotypes that they elicit or whether any of such expected stereotypes play a role in how speakers engage in society, particularly

workplace situations. This is an important aspect to consider, given the power that an individual's own perceptions can have in determining their wellbeing and behavior (Mastroianni et al., 2021; Sanchez & Brock, 1996; Wated & Sanchez, 2006). Within the body of research on meta-perceptions (e.g., people's impressions of how they are seen by others), it has been shown that employees' negative meta-perceptions (e.g., concerns about being underappreciated, disliked, or disrespected by colleagues) can influence their behavior at work, such as avoiding speaking at meetings or pursuing a promotion (Byron & Landis, 2020; Mastroianni et al., 2021). An individual's accent is indeed one characteristic that may contribute to meta-perceptions, especially because accented speakers are aware that their speech may elicit a negative reaction from their interlocutor (e.g., Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a, 2010b). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge how L2 speakers' anticipation of negative attitudes or stereotypical judgments may shape their experience in the workplace. As L2 speakers' awareness of the stigma surrounding their accent can be associated with various workplace consequences, where speakers might feel disrespected or express a desire to quit their job or change positions (Pinel & Paulin, 2005), understanding these perceptions may also help to explain high turnover rates that are apparent in the service industry (Wildes, 2001). Clearly, investigating individual people's experience with speech-engendered bias in the workplace provides implications as important as documenting the occurrence of such bias, because perceptions of oneself as a target of unfair or otherwise biased treatment alone can impact an employee's wellbeing (Sanchez & Brock, 1996; Wated & Sanchez, 2006). As such, a holistic approach to investigating the role of L2 accent in the workplace would require a focus on both the listener (e.g., by eliciting listener-based judgments) and the speaker (e.g., by documenting the experiences of L2 accented employees).

Understanding speech-based attitudes in an employment context is also a timely and important issue because employment discrimination based on accent appears to receive little attention compared to workplace discrimination based on ethnicity, physical disability, age, or gender (Wated & Sanchez, 2006). Despite being less acknowledged, it is clearly a global reality. Accent-based discrimination in the workplace has often been reported by media (e.g., Sathiyanathan & Xing, 2018) and documented through research (e.g., Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Hideg et al., 2022; Roessel et al., 2019; Skachkova, 2007) and public documents such as the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's 2021 report which presented over 6,000 cases of discrimination against employees on the basis of their origin and accent. Many cases of accent discrimination might also go unrecognized as it can often legally be justified through claims by employers, colleagues, or customers that the speaker's accent is hard to understand (Munro, 2003), despite perceived difficulty in understanding often being distorted by listener biases (Hansen & Dovidio, 2016). Therefore, more research on reactions toward L2-accented employees is warranted, especially in light of many small businesses and large corporations becoming more linguistically diverse with the rise of immigration and globalization (e.g., Sliwa & Johansson, 2014).

As speech-based discrimination in various workplace contexts is a global phenomenon, it is also important to ensure that underrepresented research contexts and participant samples are also investigated. To begin, the majority of work on L2 accents in the workplace (57%) has been conducted in the United States (Hideg et al., 2022). It is therefore unclear if similar findings would emerge in other top immigrant countries, especially in multilingual contexts, where host society members may have positive perceptions toward accented speakers in workplace environments. Indeed, a 2019 Pew Research Center survey shows that in Canada, a top

immigrant country, people generally view immigration favorably with positive attitudes toward immigrants in the workforce (Gonzalez-Barrera & Connor, 2019). Furthermore, according to a recent review of research on accent bias in the workplace (Hideg et al., 2022), 85% of the articles focused on L2 English accents, which highlights the need for research involving L2 accents in other languages, including French. Therefore, within Canada, Québec would be an ideal context for this research as a province where French is the official language and where 92% of employees regularly use French at work (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

The Status of French and L2 French Speakers in Québec

Examining how L2 French speakers are perceived in the workplace is particularly relevant in Québec, where the status of French has often been of concern throughout social and professional domains, both recently and historically, giving rise to efforts to protect the French language that are often debated in politics and the media. These debates reflect the status of Québec francophones as a linguistic minority in North America and their linguistic insecurity which arises from comparing their language to another language (i.e., English) perceived as more socially valued (Reinke et al., 2023). As such, these debates are likely rooted in the province's social history involving the divide between English and French communities. For many years, the French and English lived in separate communities, with separate religions and schools, and formed different economic classes (Heller, 1985). Although a minority, the English speakers were considered the economic elite, holding well-paid jobs and controlling key sectors of the national Canadian industry, thus allowing them to work exclusively in English, while requiring francophones to speak English if they wanted to advance economically (Bernard, 2008; Dickinson & Young, 2003). Even allophone immigrants, whose L1 was neither English nor French, would mainly speak English in public (Dickinson & Young, 2003). Because of this,

language rights became a subject of political debate beginning with the Quiet Revolution in the 1970s, which attempted to advance the socioeconomic development of French-Canadian society, with the aim to "reconquer" Montréal from the anglophone elite (d'Anglejan, 1984; Levine, 1997). This prompted various pro-French language legislative acts, beginning in 1977 with the Charter of the French Language, or Bill 101, which stipulated that French would be the official language of the workplace, schooling, and public life, thus reinforcing the status of French in Québec (Levine, 1997). However, despite subsequently reclaiming some linguistic security in the 1980s (Monnier, 1983), Québec francophones started to once again feel threatened by English due to the rise of globalization and increase of immigrants settling in the province (Kircher, 2014). With English as the global lingua franca and with the belief that allophones' linguistic behaviors could hurt the survival of French in Québec (Kircher, 2014), in recent years, the protection and promotion of French once again became the focus of political debates.

Researchers have argued, however, that the status of French in Québec is high in linguistic vitality (i.e., the likelihood of a language to survive and thrive), considering that an increasing number of anglophones and allophones speak French, that French is the language most often spoken at work, and that francophones have the highest median annual income (Bourhis, 2022; Bourhis & Sioufi, 2017). In fact, it is the vitality of the English-speaking minority that has been weakening due to the increasing number of anglophones leaving the province and the decline of student enrollment in the English school system (Bourhis, 2022). Nevertheless, the idea that the French language is in danger continues to be perpetuated through media and legislation. For example, the media has highlighted debates about whether businesses should ban the "Bonjour, Hi" greeting in favor of "Bonjour" (Plante, 2019), and covered stories about the province's language police insisting that a bar's Facebook page has too much English

(Olivier, 2022) and that the signs with only Chinese characters in a Chinese restaurant be replaced with French (Freed, 2023). In addition, with the ultimate goal of preserving the status of French and Québec's secular culture, more recently adopted legislation includes Bill 21 (2019), which prohibits certain civil service employees and public-school teachers from wearing religious symbols, and Bill 96 (2021), which reforms several parts of the Charter of the French Language. For example, the law places restrictions on how many students can study at English-language colleges (known as CEGEPs in Québec) and imposes a new requirement to pass a French exam to graduate; businesses with more than 25 employees are also required to ensure that French is the common language of the workplace; and six months after immigrants' arrival to the province, they will only be able to receive government services in French (Bill 96, 2021).

Most recently, Québec introduced legislation that increases tuition for out-of-province and international students, with the goal to stop subsidizing individuals who come to the province to study in English, which should presumably mitigate the anglicizing effect of these residents on Montréal. The extra tuition money recouped by the government would then be spent toward funding French-language universities (Lapierre & Bongiorno, 2023). Additionally, the Québec government also announced that these students who are from outside of Québec will have to reach level 5 French, out of the 12 levels on Quebec's language proficiency scale, by graduation (Watts, 2023). With 843,945 anglophones and 1,210,595 allophones residing in Québec (Statistics Canada, 2023, 2022b), and with about 19% of Québec residents being L2 speakers of French (Statistics Canada, 2022c), the issues of perceived accent discrimination and accent-based bias involving L2 French speakers in the workplace therefore become particularly pertinent in the wake of these acts to protect the French language.

The Present Dissertation

To sum up, because people often infer a person's personal and professional characteristics such as intelligence and competence from that person's accent (e.g., Holmes et al., 2001; Kang & Rubin, 2009), individuals performing various workplace roles (e.g., employers, colleagues, and clients) may react negatively toward L2 speakers, which can be detrimental not only to those speakers' chances of obtaining a job but also to their prospects of job advancement and their sense of belonging to their workplace community. However, while these social disadvantages are evident, an important step in moving toward mitigating them is first understanding how and why L2 speech triggers negative reactions. First, once we understand why listeners react in certain ways to the speech of L2 speakers, we can then take steps toward dispelling language stereotypes and mitigating biases and their consequences. While various explanations have been presented in this chapter, an expectation-violation perspective warrants particular attention in a listener-focused study as it inherently lends itself to a typical hiring situation, where expectations are developed at the resume-screening stage, only to be confirmed or violated during the interview. Second, by gaining an inside perspective of how L2 speakers internalize their stereotyped-status and react to perceived discrimination based on their accent in a speaker-focused study, we can work toward solutions to break down the barriers that limit L2 speakers' career outcomes. With these implications in mind, the following two studies shed light on how L2 speakers' speech is evaluated during job interviews and how L2 speakers experience workplace accent discrimination in a French-Canadian context.

Through the lens of the expectation violation theory, **Study 1** investigates stereotype-based expectations of expert listeners (L1 French-speaking human resource experts) evaluating L2 French job applicants' speech, focusing on how these expectations influence their perceptions

of applicants' employability at multiple points during an authentic interview process. **Study 2** shifts the focus to the L2 speaker's perspective and explores L2 French employees' experiences with perceived accent discrimination and its affective and behavioral consequences in their specific workplace contexts. These two complementary studies address the need for a comprehensive listener- and speaker-focused view on how L2 speakers are perceived and treated in the workplace. Collectively, they contribute to our understanding of listeners' accent bias and speakers' perceived accent stigmatization and inform future work focusing on mitigating accent-based discrimination in the workplace and promoting the inclusion and acceptance of accented employees in the sociopolitical complex yet linguistically rich context of Québec.

Chapter 2: Study 1

The Influence of Speech Expectations on the Perceived Employability of L2 French Job Applicants

Researchers have long investigated whether and how people's attitudes influence their reactions and decision-making (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Kaiser et al., 2010). For instance, biases toward accented speakers (i.e., speakers whose speech differs from the expected language variety) have been shown to affect decision-making in various settings, with consequences for speakers' access to housing, education, or employment (Kalin, 1982; Matsuda, 1991; Munro, 2003; Purnell et al., 1999). The employment interview especially, which tends to hold the most weight in terms of selecting applicants (Gatewood et al., 2008), is a prime example of a situation where biased decision-making may occur (Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Hopper & Williams, 1973; Rakić et al., 2011). For example, an employer's perception of an applicant's employability can be colored by the presence of a nonstandard, regional, or second language (L2) accent, as listeners tend to attribute lower competence and status to accented speech, particularly in comparison to speakers of standard, expected, or first language (L1) varieties (Fuertes et al., 2012; Roessel et al., 2019).

Furthermore, because employers often have access to the applicant's name, photo, and background information before meeting them for the interview, it is inevitable that certain expectations will be formed, such as expectations of the applicant's status as an L1 or L2 speaker, how difficult their speech will be to understand, or even the prestige of their language variety. According to the expectation violation theory (Burgoon & Jones, 1976; Burgoon, 1993; Hansen et al., 2017a, 2017b), if the applicant subsequently violates such expectations, speaking in a more or less socially desirable way, it can lead to increased or decreased evaluations based

on first impressions during the interview. However, what remains to be explored is whether violated expectations have evaluative consequences beyond initial impressions, impacting final hiring decisions. This study therefore investigated the potentially dynamic changes in employability evaluations during mock job interviews, exploring the role of confirmed and violated expectations prompted by resume information. With a focus on equally qualified L1 and L2 French speakers applying for an entry-level position with a high communication requirement (a waitress), this study also examined how the applicants compare in their employability and whether employability perceptions are related to violated expectations of applicants' speech characteristics (e.g., comprehensibility, accentedness).

Background Literature

When L2 speakers participate in a job interview, it is possible that the employer will ascribe certain stereotypical traits to them on the basis of their nonstandard speech patterns. For example, a listener may attribute low intelligence, minimal education, low social status, or lack of competence to someone who speaks with a strong L2 accent (Brennan & Brennan, 1981; Dragojevic et al., 2019; Fuertes et al., 2012; Rakić et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 1977). Perceived communicative effectiveness can also inform listeners' judgments of L2 speakers' professional characteristics, such as their initiative, leadership skills, ability to work independently, and ability to relate to others (Beaulieu et al., 2022a). Consequentially, these types of judgments may inform the employer's perception of the applicant's suitability for the job (Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Hopper & Williams, 1973; Matsuda, 1991; Roessel et al., 2019). However, because resumes are typically the first item to be evaluated in the hiring process (Dipboye et al., 1984), it is likely that the employer will have already formed certain expectations about the applicant prior to meeting them for the interview (Derous et al., 2009, 2014, 2017). What is concerning, is that

these expectations have the potential to shape the employer's perceptions of the applicant not only before meeting them but also once presented with speech cues during the interview stage.

This perspective is explained by the expectation violation theory (Burgoon & Jones, 1976; Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005), where people's attitudes drive their social behavior when there is a mismatch between their social expectations (typically based on stereotypes) and reality. Thus, counter-stereotypical individuals—those who the listener perceives to speak better or worse than the "typical" speaker of that social group—may encounter positive or negative accent bias, yielding them either greater or fewer social rewards in comparison to stereotypically congruent people (Aboud et al., 1974; Jussim et al., 1987). For example, an employer may make assumptions about the type of accent a person will have based on their appearance as seen previously through social media or a resume photo. Hansen et al. (2018) examined this plausible situation where raters first saw a photo of a German or Turkish person (prompting expectations), then subsequently heard German speakers provide a short interview greeting in either a standard German or a Turkish accent. Favorable evaluations of job applicants whose photo depicted a prototypical German man were downgraded when they spoke with an unexpected Turkish accent. This change in evaluation was greater than in the congruent situation where the expected Turkish candidate subsequently spoke with a Turkish accent (see also Hansen et al., 2017b). Thus, this initial "shock" of an unexpected accent, which was presumed from visual information alone, led to the German-looking but Turkish-accented candidate being evaluated as the least hirable of all the candidates.

Despite manipulating rater expectations about the applicant's social identity and language status (as an L1 vs. L2 speaker) and demonstrating positive and negative effects of violated expectations (Hansen et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2018), researchers have thus far not captured other

expectations that raters might have about the applicant's speech. It is therefore unclear the extent to which violations of other expectations, particularly those targeting such characteristics as the prestige or strength of job candidates' accent or their comprehensibility, may play a role in the evaluations that job candidates receive in incongruent situations. Indeed, it is possible that an applicant may be downgraded during the interview because they speak a language variety perceived to be less standard or less prestigious than the employer may have expected, especially because speakers of nonstandard varieties are often considered less competent and less employable than standard-accented speakers (Giles et al., 1981; Rakić et al., 2011; Roessel et al., 2019). For example, if a job applicant speaks with a broad Australian accent (which is considered less prestigious than a standard Australian accent), this may be viewed negatively as it violates what is socially expected in the high-stakes, status-laden context of an interview (Ball et al., 1984). On the other hand, job applicants may be upgraded in terms of job suitability, intelligence, or competence if they speak a more prestigious variety than what was expected of them, such as when an African American applicant dressed in upper-class clothing speaks standard English during the interview (Jussim et al., 1987). Thus, increased or decreased evaluations may occur from violations of how "well-spoken" one is presumed to be based on expectations of a more or less prestigious accent.

Similar to accent prestige, job applicants' evaluations in incongruent situations (i.e., when a listener's initial expectations are violated) may be explained by expectations of accent strength, especially because stronger accents tend to be evaluated less favorably on various dimensions of status and solidarity (Brennan & Brennan, 1981; Dragojevic et al., 2017; Ryan et al., 1977). During the hiring process, employers may form expectations of a speaker's accent strength based on information mentioned on their resume, such as their length of residence in the

target country, language proficiency, or contact with L1 speakers (i.e., through previous job experience, education, etc.). To illustrate this, Dragojevic et al. (2019) provided information about Latin American-born speakers' length of residence in the United States (e.g., less than 6 months, half their life, most of their life) to trigger expectations of accent strength for speakers who had moderately strong Spanish accents. When the speaker's accent was stronger than expected, they were attributed less intelligence and less competence compared to when the speaker's accent was as strong as expected. Although Dragojevic et al. did not include a measure of comprehensibility, it is possible that raters also associate different expected degrees of accentedness with different expected levels of effort required to understand each speaker, especially because stronger accents are often more difficult to process (e.g., Dragojevic et al., 2017). In fact, speakers with the strongest accents are frequently perceived as the hardest to understand and receive the lowest employability ratings, regardless of the quality of their interview responses (Roessel et al., 2019). Taken together, if an applicant has an accent that is less standard than expected or stronger and more difficult to understand than expected, this may impact employers' perceptions of their job suitability.

Assuming that speech plays an important role in expectation-driven judgments, it then also seems plausible that the amount of communication a position requires could influence an employer's decision-making (Derous et al., 2014, 2017; Hansen & Dovidio, 2016). For example, if interviewers experience difficulty in understanding a job candidate, this could translate to negative hiring evaluations due to their assumption that colleagues and customers would also experience a similar difficulty, given that customers often make biased judgments of accented employees during service encounters (Tombs & Hill, 2014). Therefore, when investigating expectation violations, it would be important to examine them in customer-facing job contexts

where violated speech expectations might be most consequential. Although L2 applicants are typically rated lower in such job contexts (Timming, 2017), their employability might also depend on their L1 background. For instance, Hosoda and Stone-Romero (2010) showed that, compared to French-accented applicants, Japanese-accented applicants were judged less suitable for a job with high communication demands, despite the Japanese applicants being more comprehensible during the interview, implying that these applicants' country of origin was more important than their comprehensibility for jobs with a high communication requirement. Therefore, it would also be important to consider employability perceptions of L2 speakers from multiple backgrounds to fully capture how violated speech expectations might impact their chances of being hired.

Finally, it is also unknown whether the effect of expectations on evaluations is only short-lived, or whether expectation-driven decision-making persists over time. In prior expectation studies in employment contexts, listeners were presented with a single, 3- to 20-second audio per candidate (Dragojevic et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2018). While those findings shed light on the role of expectations in forming first impressions, this would only suggest concerning implications if such colored perceptions were unchanged by the end of the interview. Indeed, fluctuations in evaluations over the course of an interview would not be surprising as employers may refine their assessment as they adapt to the speaker's accent (Baese-Berk, 2018; Garrod et al., 2018; Mai & Hoffmann, 2014). Additionally, with extended individuating content provided through applicants' responses, any diagnostic information inferred from their accent might get diluted over time (Nisbett et al., 1981).

Therefore, even though this body of research appears to raise concerning implications for certain job candidates, especially L2 speakers, violated expectations might not always be

detrimental to hiring decisions. First, positive violations can upgrade evaluations in favor of the applicant (Aboud et al., 1974; Hansen et al., 2017a; Jussim et al., 1987), and second, effects of violated expectations might not be as extreme as research findings have presumed. For example, in a pilot project conducted for this study, Lindberg and Trofimovich (2023) elicited employability ratings of French-speaking job applicants during an interview and prompted expectations using resume information that either portrayed applicants as L1 French or L2 French speakers. Contrary to findings from previous research (Dragojevic et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2018), there was little evidence of expectation violations impacting applicants' employability, as the results revealed similar evaluation patterns between the congruent and incongruent scenarios. When considering possible reasons for these null findings, there are several gaps that must be addressed. First, while expectations of the speaker's L1 versus L2 status were experimentally introduced through the resume, there was no measure to capture what listeners were actually expecting based on this information, and subsequently how they perceived the speech during the interview and whether it aligned with their expectations. Similarly, in prior research, effects of violated expectations appeared to emerge most strongly when expectations were prompted through visual information (Aboud et al., 1974; Jussim et al., 1987; Hansen et al., 2018), which was not included in the pilot project's manipulation. Thus, it is unclear how listeners interpreted the information presented and whether the target manipulation, which excluded visual information about the applicant, in fact worked as intended. Because listeners did not necessarily have a background in interview or hiring practices, it is also possible that applicants' evaluations would differ for listeners with experience in hiring practices (Atkins & Kent, 1989).

In addition, while the pilot project included two L1-speaker French varieties as a baseline measure for comparison (European and Québec French), only one L2 French variety was examined (Spanish-accented French). Therefore, even though listeners' expectations did not affect their impressions of job applicants from this community of L2 speakers, recruiting additional L2 French speakers from different language backgrounds would help clarify if any incongruency effects might extend to speakers from other backgrounds. Furthermore, the first interview evaluation was given after a 40-second interview response which included individuating content that may have mitigated any expectation-driven influences, especially because stereotypes "operate most powerfully in the abstract, applying primarily to undifferentiated individuals, and they may exert relatively little impact on judgments about concrete, individuated targets" (Nisbett et al., 1981, p. 272). Thus, to capture a true first-impression evaluation that is not influenced by content, it would be necessary to first present listeners with samples of candidates' speech (e.g., informal greetings), where accent would be the only individuating factor, before presenting listeners with those candidates' content- and person-specific interview responses. Lastly, despite the suggested null effect of expectations in a negative violation scenario, the pilot project did not capture the entire possible set of relevant scenarios. It lacked a positive violation scenario (e.g., an expected L2 French candidate speaking L1 French), as well as a control condition without manipulated expectations (e.g., an anonymous candidate speaking L2 French), which is a requirement when arguing that expectations are operative (Burgoon & LePoire, 1993). Therefore, it is still unclear if expected L2 French speakers would be significantly upgraded when they speak better than expected, in comparison to presumed L1 speakers whose speech matches listener expectations. Equally unclear is whether

job candidates are evaluated differently when expectations are manipulated compared to when they are not evoked.

The Current Study

The goal of this study was to expand upon the pilot project and previous expectation work by addressing these aforementioned gaps. Reflecting the local sociolinguistic context of the study (Montréal, Québec), job applicants consisted of L2 French speakers from Spanish and Arabic backgrounds as well as L1 French speakers of European and Québec French varieties. To reflect the population involved in hiring applicants, listeners assuming the role of employers were individuals who were invested in hiring practices at the time of the study. A typical interview process was emulated by presenting those experienced listeners first with job applicants' resumes, then with audio-recorded interview excerpts, which included a brief interview greeting (accent-only impression) and two interview responses (accent plus content impression). This presentation sequence also allowed for a dynamic perspective on how employability evaluations might evolve throughout the interview process. Listeners' expectations were prompted through information on job applicants' resumes, using cues such as appearance (resume photo), name, and previous location of work and study, which have been shown to inform judgments of job candidates (Cotton et al., 2008; Derous et al., 2014; Dipboye et al., 1984; Oreopoulos, 2011). Each job candidate was evaluated under three different conditions, such that, for instance, a Latina L2 French speaker's interview responses followed (a) a resume depicting Alejandra García López from Lima, Peru (expectation-congruent scenario), (b) a resume depicting Jeanne Tremblay from Montréal, Québec (expectation-incongruent scenario), or (c) an anonymous resume (no-expectancy scenario), with comparable scenarios created for an L1 speaker's interview responses.

Besides manipulating the candidates' social identity as L1 or L2 speakers, this study also captured listeners' expectations about applicants' comprehensibility as well as accent prestige and strength. Finally, as a candidate's employability might depend on the position, where L2 speakers tend to be viewed least favorably when the position requires communication or customer contact (Timming, 2017), this study focused on candidates applying to a waitress position—an entry-level, low-status job requiring communication with customers. The following three research questions guided this study:

1. How do L2 and L1 French-speaking applicants compare in their employability ratings over the course of an interview for a waitress position?
2. Do listeners' evaluations of L2 and L1 French-speaking applicants differ under various expectation conditions (congruent, incongruent, no-expectancy)?
3. Are listeners' expectation violations of applicants' comprehensibility, accent prestige, and accentedness related to their employability evaluations, particularly in counter-stereotypical scenarios, during job interviews for a waitress position?

Method

Raters as Interviewers

A total of 55 L1 Québec French speakers (30 females, 25 males) participated in this study as raters, assuming the role of an interviewer. They were recruited through advertisements posted on various social media groups for professionals working in human resource (HR) management or students in university HR programs. They were 30.87 years old on average (SD = 7.78; *range* = 21–55) and were born and raised in Québec, having lived there most of their life (M = 30.27 years; SD = 8.06). Raters reported using French for about 80.82% of their day on average (SD = 17.53) and being moderately familiar with L2 French speech (M = 73.49; SD = 24.06), where

100 meant "very familiar." In terms of their educational background, their current or highest degrees were either secondary or certificate credentials (8), a bachelors (21), a graduate microprogram certificate (5), a masters (17), or a doctorate (4).

All raters had previous experience in hiring practices, with an ongoing or completed degree in an HR program or prior professional HR experience. More specifically, 11 were students studying in an HR program at the time of the study, 12 had already completed an HR degree (e.g., Bachelor in Human Resource Management, Masters in Human Resources, Certificate in Human Resources), and 36 (including 4 with HR degrees) were employed as HR professionals, with 4.99 years of experience on average (*SD* = 5.73; *range* = 0.5–30 years). Of the 55 recruited participants, 51 raters reported having experience conducting interviews in French at their job, where they estimated having interviewed 48 candidates on average (*SD* = 69.68; *range* = 3–300) with an additional two raters reporting a significantly higher number of interviews (500 and 5,000). These 51 raters with interviewing experience also estimated that 37.92% of their interviews were with L2 French-speaking candidates (*SD* = 23.63%). In terms of their previous relevant coursework and training, 34 raters reported taking a course on hiring practices, 32 had taken a course on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and 18 had a course that discussed accent bias.

Speakers as Job Applicants

Four female French speakers were recruited to assume the role of potential job applicants in mock job interviews. Female applicants were chosen because discrimination in hiring practices affects L2 female job applicants significantly more than L2 male applicants (Timming, 2017). The three target speakers included one who speaks L1 Spanish (22 years old, born in Lima, Peru), one who speaks L1 Arabic (33 years old, born in Tripoli, Libya), and an L1 Québec

French speaker (25 years old, born in Laval, Québec). The L1 Spanish and Arabic varieties of L2 French are common in Québec, where the languages most often spoken at home after English and French are Arabic and Spanish, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2021). While the L1 Québec French speaker had resided in Québec her entire life, the speakers from Peru and Libya had been living in Québec for 3 and 9 years, respectively. The L2 French speakers had studied French for 3.5 years on average (*range* = 3–4), and were enrolled in an intermediate, B2-level French course (according to the Common European Framework of Reference) at the time of the interview. They also similarly self-rated their competence in speaking French as 57 and 52 on a 100-point scale, where 100 meant "very competent." The final applicant (whose employability was not analyzed for this report) was an L1 speaker of European French (22 years old, born in Lille, France); this speaker's recordings were used to balance the distribution of speakers across L1 and L2 French varieties. At the time when they participated in the mock job interviews, the four speakers were all studying at a university in Montréal in bachelor (2), masters (1), or doctorate (1) programs.

Materials

The materials included a job advertisement for an entry-level position as a waitress, 12 job applicant resumes, four sets of interview recordings from each speaker, a set of rating scales, and a background questionnaire.

Job Application Materials

First, an authentic job advertisement, inspired by a real job recruitment posting, was created for a waitress position at a restaurant in Montréal. The advertisement included a job description, followed by a list of the main duties and the desired skills and qualifications, with communication skills emphasized (see Appendix A). The position of a waitress represented a

low-status job with a high communication requirement, which was verified by having the job posting prerated by 14 graduate students (8 females, 6 males) for status and communication using a 100-point scale, where higher ratings indicated higher status and greater importance of oral communication skills. The status of the job was considered low (M = 40.64, SD = 18.15) but oral communication skills were perceived as important (M = 85.27, SD = 13.98).

Second, 12 resumes were created for 12 different candidates applying for the advertised waitress position, where all resumes included similar information such as one year of relevant job experience (i.e., as a waitress), with four bullets describing the tasks candidates previously performed for that job, and a completed bachelor degree in a social science or humanities field. Each candidate's presumed status as an L1 or L2 speaker and their speech characteristics were established through four key details available in each resume: (a) their name, (b) their photo, (c) the city where they previously worked, and (d) the city where they had studied (see Appendix B for sample resumes). For example, a resume for an expected Québec French candidate portrayed a photo of a Caucasian female and included a common Québécois name (e.g., Jeanne Tremblay), and described that she had previously worked and studied in Montréal, Québec. On the other hand, a resume for an expected Latina applicant speaking L2 French portrayed a photo of a Latina female and included a common Hispanic name (e.g., Alejandra García López), and described that she had previously worked and studied in Lima, Peru. The resume photos, which depicted university students from the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca (McDonough & Trofimovich, 2019), were selected by considering image prototypicality, as evaluated by 20 L1 Québec French speakers (ages 18–33). According to paired-samples t tests, the four photos of Caucasian women were judged to be similar in how representative they were of L1 French speakers from Québec or France, $t(19) < 1.45$, $p > .165$, $d < 0.32$, while the remaining four

visuals (two images of Latina women and two images of Middle Eastern women) were rated similarly representative of L1 Spanish speakers from Peru, $t(19) = 0.96$, $p = .347$, $d = 0.22$, and L1 Arabic speakers from Jordan, $t(19) = 1.25$, $p = .226$, $d = 0.28$, respectively. There were also four anonymous resumes used for the no-expectancy (control) scenarios, which included similar previous work and study experience but which did not include the name of the applicant nor their prior location of work and study, and only presented a silhouette in lieu of a photo.

Mock Job Interview Recordings

The four speakers engaged in a mock job interview with the first author over Zoom. Using their phone's recording function, each recorded three different scripted interview greetings (see Appendix C) and spontaneous responses to six different interview questions for the same entry-level waitress position (see Table 1 for the interview questions). The interview greetings (e.g., *Bonjour! Merci de m'avoir invité aujourd'hui pour cet entretien. C'est un plaisir de vous rencontrer. Comment allez-vous?* "Hello! Thank you for inviting me today for this interview. It is a pleasure to meet you. How are you?"), which were saved as individual audio files, were 6.58 seconds long on average ($SD = 0.95$, *range* = 6–9) and were intended to provide raters with a speech sample without individuating job-specific content. Responses to each interview question, which were 36.33 seconds long on average ($SD = 3.68$, *range* = 31–40), were similarly saved individually, resulting in 24 audio clips (6 audios per speaker).

Table 1

Paired Interview Questions (Same for All Speakers)

Question set	Response 1	Response 2
Set 1	Tell me about yourself. What makes you the ideal person for this job?	How do you respond to criticism?
Set 2	What aspect of this position interests you?	How do you define a job well done?
Set 3	What do you think are the qualities required to be successful in this position?	How do you deal with conflicts?

To assess the quality of the interview responses independent of accent, written transcripts of each response were prerated by 10 L1 Québec French speakers on a 100-point scale ranging between "poor response" and "excellent response." Based on the results of paired-samples *t* tests comparing the quality ratings (see Appendix D for results), the six interview responses per speaker were then organized in three comparable sets of two responses, as shown in Table 1, so that each speaker could subsequently be assessed in the expectation-congruent (e.g., Set 1), expectation-incongruent (e.g., Set 2), and no-expectancy (e.g., Set 3) conditions. The quality ratings of the two responses within each set were comparable, $t(9) < 1.87$, $p > .095$, $d < 0.59$, as were the quality ratings between the three target speakers within the first and the second interview response, $t(9) < 2.20$, $p > .056$, $d < 0.69$.

Finally, 20 additional L1 Québec French speakers prerated all the interview greetings (three different greetings per speaker presented in a random order) for various speech characteristics (see Appendix E for results). According to paired-samples *t* tests, both L2 speakers were less comprehensible, more accented, considered to speak a less standard French,

and overall less competent in French than both L1 French speakers, $t(19) > 3.02$, $ps < .007$, $d > 0.67$. While the two L2 speakers were similarly accented, $t(19) = 1.34$, $p = .197$, $d = 0.30$, the L1 Arabic speaker was considered more comprehensible, to speak a more standard French variety, and more competent in French than the L1 Spanish speaker, $t(19) > 3.11$, $p < .006$, $d > 0.70$, but only by about 7–10 points on a 100-point scale.

Rating Scales

The 100-point sliding scales accompanying the resumes and interview responses included one target rating measuring employability, where raters evaluated if they would hire that candidate (*never—certainly*), and three additional measures of the candidate's speech: (a) comprehensibility, where raters evaluated how easy or difficult it was to understand the speaker (*difficult to understand—easy to understand*), (b) perceived prestige of the speaker's French, where raters assessed how standard they perceived the speaker's speech to be (*nonstandard French—standard French*), and (c) accentedness, where raters judged the strength of the speaker's accent (*very accented—not at all accented*). While the endpoints of the scale were clearly marked, the scales did not contain numerical markings so as to capture raters' impressionistic judgments, as recommended in prior research on speech perception (Saito et al., 2017; Tsunemoto et al., 2021). Because no audio was presented at the resume-screening stage, the wording of the scales was rephrased to ask how easy or difficult raters expect it would be for them to understand the speaker (for comprehensibility), how standard they expect the speaker's French to be (for accent prestige), and how accented they expect the speaker to sound in French (for accentedness).

Procedure

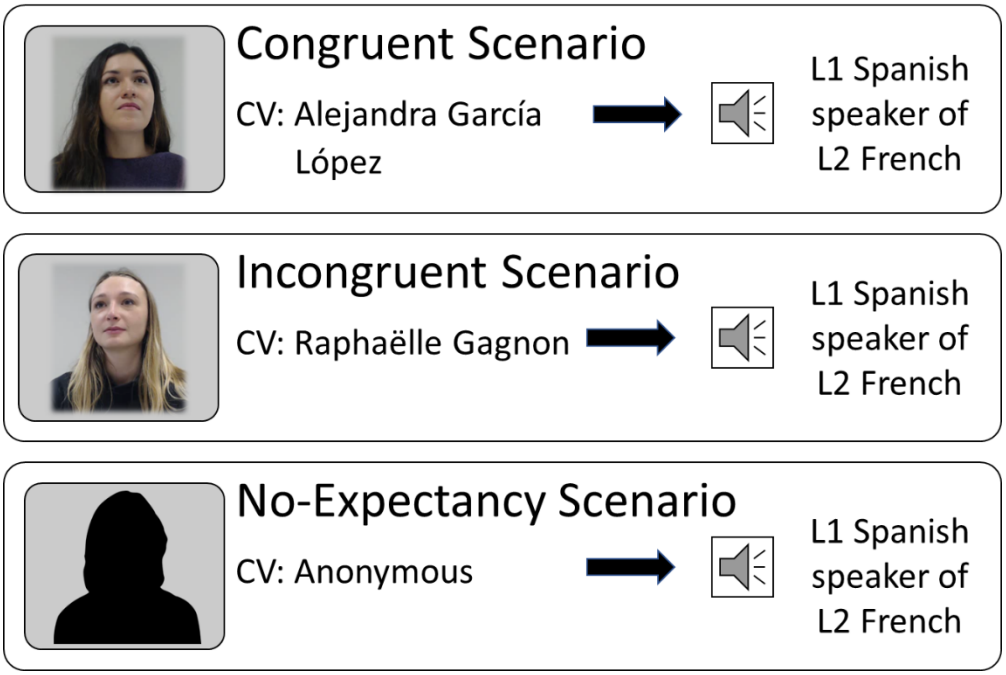
The entire procedure was administered remotely online using LimeSurvey (https://www.limesurvey.org). Raters were instructed to use headphones and a computer (not a smartphone) and to find a quiet space where they would not be distracted for 45 minutes. While 82% reported using headphones, the remaining 18% listened to the audios through their computer speakers. Despite having limited control over raters' listening conditions compared to in-person sessions in a lab, online data collection tools tend to elicit high reliability for L2 speech ratings and produce comparable data to lab-based studies (Nagle, 2019; Nagle & Rehman, 2021). Nevertheless, multiple controls were introduced to ensure similar rating conditions. For example, raters were not permitted to skip questions or return to previous pages, and their time spent on each page was tracked to verify that they allowed enough time to listen to the entirety of each audio. No issues or concerns were reported in response to a final open-ended question regarding any problems with the survey or audios.

After agreeing to the conditions outlined in the consent form (2 minutes), raters were asked to imagine that they were part of an interview panel for the restaurant where they work to help make hiring decisions. The task instructions informed them that they would be evaluating 12 different applicants for a waitress position based on resumes, a brief greeting, and two interview responses that follow a typical sequence of interview questions. To familiarize raters with the procedure and the rating scales that followed each resume and audio recording, they completed a practice task (3 minutes) which presented them with a Barista job ad, an example resume, and a sample of an interview greeting and a potential interview response (not used in the main task) in written form, accompanied by the target scale (employability) as well as the remaining three speech scales (comprehensibility, accent prestige, accentedness).

For the main rating task (30 minutes), raters evaluated 12 applicants, where each of the four speakers was presented as if they were three different individuals: once in a congruent scenario, once in an incongruent scenario (positive or negative violation), and once in a no-expectancy (control) scenario using unique (non-repeated) sets of two interview responses. The expectation manipulation was introduced through the resumes. For instance, the L2 speakers were presented as either an L2 French speaker (e.g., Alejandra García López from Lima, Peru, with a photo of a Latina woman) in a congruent scenario, as an L1-speaking candidate (e.g., Raphaëlle Gagnon from Montréal, Québec, with a photo of a Caucasian woman) in an incongruent scenario, or as an anonymous candidate (e.g., anonymous resume with no photo) in a no-expectancy (control) scenario, as exemplified in Figure 1. The incongruent scenarios involved either a positive or negative expectation violation, where the L1 speaker's interview following an L2 French resume illustrated a positive violation scenario, whereas the L2 French speaker's interview following an L1 French resume characterized a negative violation scenario. Although raters heard each speaker's voice three times (once per condition), it was unlikely that they recognized that each speaker contributed three interviews, because they were introduced through different resumes and accompanying images, because the content of each interview differed, and because they were presented in a semirandom order with two to four different voices separating each speaker's set of recordings.

Figure 1

Example of the L1 Spanish Speaker Presented in the Three Expectation Scenarios



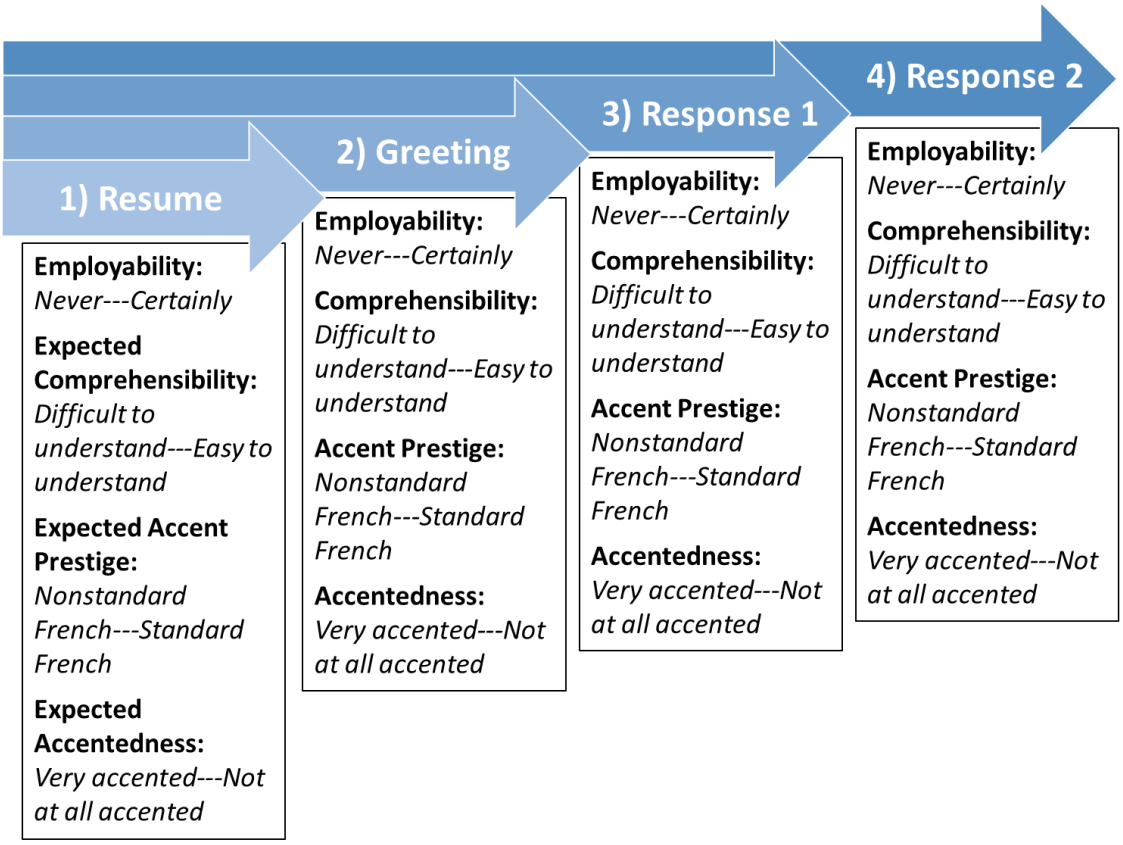
Note. The incongruent scenario involved a negative expectation violation, where the presumed L1 French speaker (Raphaëlle Gagnon from Montréal, Québec) was presented with the audio clips recorded by an L2 speaker.

Raters evaluated each applicant on four occasions using the four sliding scales (employability, comprehensibility, accent prestige, accentedness), where they first rated the applicant after inspecting their resume (to capture their initial impression and expectations), then once more after the interview greeting, and then two more times after each interview response, as outlined in Figure 2. At each stage, they were also given the option to explain their ratings. Raters were instructed to consider everything they knew about the candidate when rating her employability at each stage, such that the final evaluation after the second interview response was meant to capture their final hiring decision, taking into account the whole interview and not

just the last response. Each audio was presented on separate survey pages and always played automatically after 5 seconds and only once. Lastly, raters filled out the background questionnaire (3 minutes).

Figure 2

The Four Rating Stages for Each Applicant



Each rater was randomly assigned to one of three counterbalanced lists, with 18 or 19 raters per list. Within each list, raters reacted to the same four speakers, each presented in three different scenarios (expectation-congruent, expectation-incongruent, and no-expectancy) using unique interview content (one set containing a greeting, plus two responses). However, across the three lists, all raters evaluated the same four speakers in a within-participants design, such

that the same interview content per speaker (three sets containing a greeting, plus two responses) occurred once in the incongruent scenario, once in the congruent scenario, and once in the no-expectancy (control) scenario. In each list, interviews (greeting, plus a question set) followed a pseudorandom order with the constraint that there were 2–4 interviews presented before the same speaker's voice appeared again in the list.

Data Analysis

Employability, comprehensibility, accent prestige, and accentedness ratings (out of 100) were exported from LimeSurvey into a spreadsheet and checked for internal consistency using two-way, consistency, average-measure intraclass correlations. Inter-rater reliability was high (Larson-Hall, 2016) across all survey versions and scenarios for the L2 speakers' employability (.91–.92), comprehensibility (.95–.97), accent prestige (.97–.98), and accentedness (.97–.98), as well as for the L1 Québec French speaker's employability (.91), comprehensibility (.98), accent prestige (.98), and accentedness (.97). Regarding statistical assumptions, the employability ratings were negatively skewed for the L1 Québec French speaker in all conditions reflecting raters' positive perceptions toward the applicant from a shared language variety, while the employability ratings for the L2 speakers were characterized by normal distributions. The fully within-participants design presented no concerns with homogeneity of variances; however, when the data violated the assumption of sphericity (with Mauchly's $p < .05$), the Huynh-Feldt values were reported for the repeated-measures ANOVAs, as recommended by Field (2018). All pairwise comparisons were Bonferroni-adjusted, with the initial alpha level for significance set at .05. Effect sizes were interpreted in light of field-specific guidelines for repeated-measures comparisons, where Cohen's *d* values (0.60, 1.00, and 1.40) and *r* values (.25, .40, and .60) correspond to small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

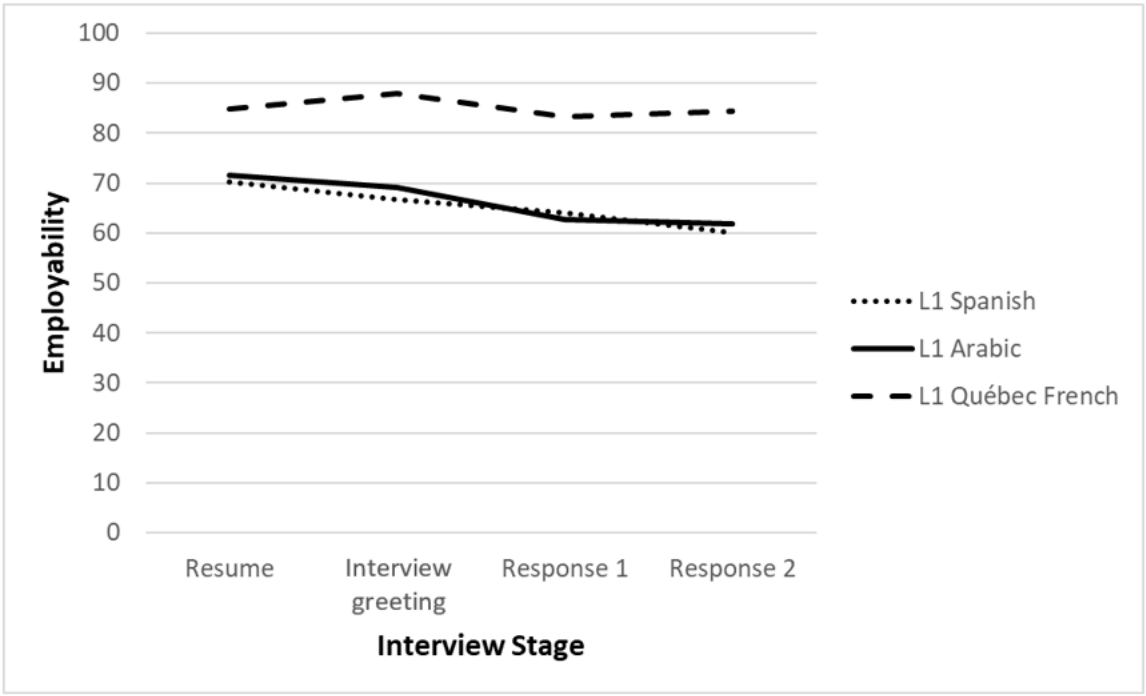
Results

Employability Evaluations Between Speakers

Before exploring the potential impact of expectation violations on interview outcomes, it was first important to understand how the applicants compared to each other in the most typical interview situation where their speech matches their resume identity (i.e., in the congruent scenario). Therefore, to answer the first research question regarding how the applicants compared in employability at different interview stages, the employability ratings assigned to the three target applicants in the congruent scenario were compared through two-way repeated-measures ANOVAs, with speakers' L1 (Spanish, Arabic, Québec French) and time (Resume, Greeting, Response 1, Response 2) as within-participants variables. The results (illustrated in Figure 3) revealed a significant main effect for language, $F(1.44, 77.64) = 33.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .38$, a significant main effect for time, $F(2.33, 126.02) = 9.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$, and a significant two-way interaction, $F(4.54, 244.97) = 2.69$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, which was explored through tests of interaction effects. In terms of between-speaker comparisons, the L1 Québec French applicant was consistently evaluated as more employable than both L2 French speakers in every stage of the interview, $t(54) > 4.62$, $p < .001$, $d > 0.62$, while the L2 French speakers were comparable to each other in every interview stage, $t(54) < 1.35$, $p > .184$, $d < 0.18$.

Figure 3

Employability of the Target Applicants Throughout the Interview in the Congruent Scenario



In terms of the evaluation time course, comparisons were first made between the resume stage and the interview greeting to understand if employability evaluations fluctuate based on first (accent-only) impressions alone. A simple short greeting by the L1 Québec French speaker was enough to significantly increase her employability ratings, M_{diff} = +3.11, $t(54) = 2.86$, $p = .036$, $d = 0.39$, whereas the L2 French speakers' employability did not change after their greeting, $t(54) < 1.60$, $p > .117$, $d < 0.22$. Finally, employability ratings between the resume stage and the final stage were compared to understand how an applicant's entire interview performance (including accent impressions and job-specific content) enhance (or reduce) their chance of being hired. For the L1 Québec French applicant, there was no difference between her initial and final evaluation, M_{diff} = –0.31, $t(54) = 0.14$, $p = .891$, $d = 0.02$, suggesting that her interview performance did not add to or subtract from her resume-based employability

impression. On the other hand, the L1 Spanish applicant's employability decreased over time, where her final employability evaluation was significantly lower than her evaluation from resume-based qualifications, $M_{diff} = -10.22$, $t(54) = 3.61$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.49$. The same decrease in ratings was also found for the L1 Arabic applicant, $M_{diff} = -9.67$, $t(54) = 3.05$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.41$.

To summarize, in interview situations where an applicant's identity is known upfront and stereotypically matches their interview voice, L2 French speakers (regardless of their L1) appear to be perceived as less employable than an L1 Québec French speaker for a waitress position. In addition, while first impressions made a positive impact on raters' employability perceptions of the L1 speaker, they did not change their hiring decisions for the L2 speakers. Lastly, after hearing interview responses, the employability of the L1 speaker remained unchanged from her resume-based impression, whereas both L2 speakers' chances of being hired decreased from their initial resume-based employability. What remains to be answered, however, is whether these applicants might have an easier or harder time being hired when their resume evokes certain expectations that are subsequently not met during the interview process.

Employability Evaluations Under Different Expectation Conditions

To answer the second research question regarding the role of rater expectations in their evaluations of job applicants at different timepoints in the interview process, the employability ratings assigned to the two L2 speakers and the L1 speaker were compared through two-way repeated-measures ANOVAs, with expectation (Congruent, Incongruent, No-expectancy) and time (Resume, Greeting, Response 1, Response 2) as within-participants variables. Because the speakers were different individuals who engaged in interviews in different, person-specific styles and who represented negative or positive expectation violations, employability of the L1 Spanish

and L1 Arabic speakers (negative expectation violations) and the L1 French speaker (positive expectation violation) was analyzed separately. Table 2 summarizes descriptive statistics for raters' employability evaluations by condition and interview stage.

Table 2

Means (Standard Deviations) for Employability Ratings by Condition and Interview Stage

		Interview stage			
Resume	Expectation	Resume	Greeting	Response 1	Response2
L1 Spanish Applicant (L2 French)					
L2 French	Congruent	70.33 (20.21)	66.62 (26.09)	63.93 (24.88)	60.11 (26.58)
L1 French	Incongruent	85.42 (14.94)	67.60 (24.04)	60.62 (25.56)	57.75 (27.66)
Anonymous	Control	69.49 (25.91)	69.36 (24.13)	65.91 (25.31)	61.64 (28.81)
L1 Arabic Applicant (L2 French)					
L2 French	Congruent	71.58 (22.54)	69.20 (25.09)	62.65 (26.35)	61.91 (29.37)
L1 French	Incongruent	85.62 (14.51)	70.64 (23.07)	64.76 (23.68)	63.40 (27.01)
Anonymous	Control	72.09 (25.31)	70.13 (23.98)	65.11 (23.92)	66.02 (28.06)
L1 Québec French Applicant					
L1 French	Congruent	84.80 (15.44)	87.91 (13.07)	83.20 (20.93)	84.49 (18.90)
L2 French	Incongruent	67.76 (22.93)	84.53 (15.61)	84.27 (18.35)	88.87 (15.59)
Anonymous	Control	73.27 (22.69)	83.42 (17.19)	80.07 (19.28)	81.47 (20.17)

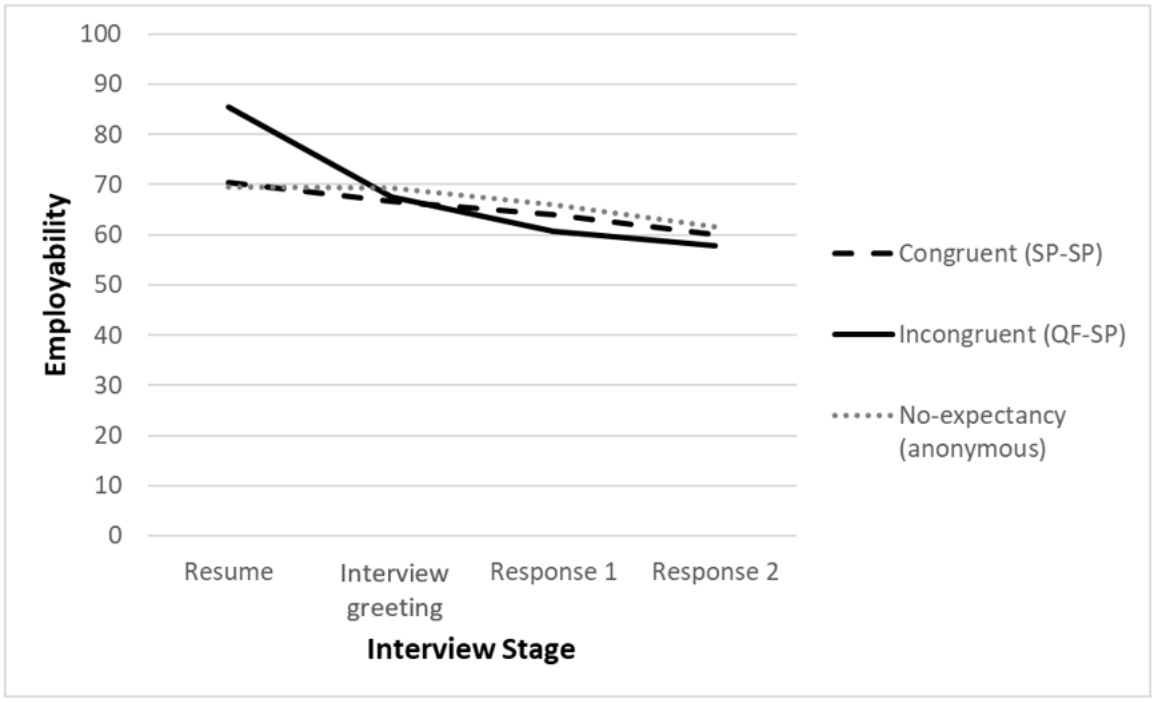
Negative Expectation Violations

The two-way repeated-measures ANOVA analysis for raters' evaluations of the L1 Spanish applicant (illustrated in Figure 4) revealed no statistically significant main effect for

expectation condition, $F(1.72, 92.92) = 0.68$, $p = .486$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$, but a significant main effect for time, $F(2.01, 108.46) = 37.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .412$, and a significant two-way interaction, $F(4.23, 228.25) = 10.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .163$, which was explored through tests of interaction effects. Regarding the expectation manipulation, although the resume depicting an L1 Québec French speaker was deemed significantly more employable than the anonymous resume, $M_{diff} = +15.93$, $t(54) = 4.57$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.62$, and the L1 Spanish resume, $M_{diff} = +15.09$, $t(54) = 6.26$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.84$, there were no differences between conditions at the other three timepoints, $t(54) < 1.86$, $p > .068$, $d < 0.25$, suggesting that rater expectations did not impact their evaluations beyond the resume screening stage.

Figure 4

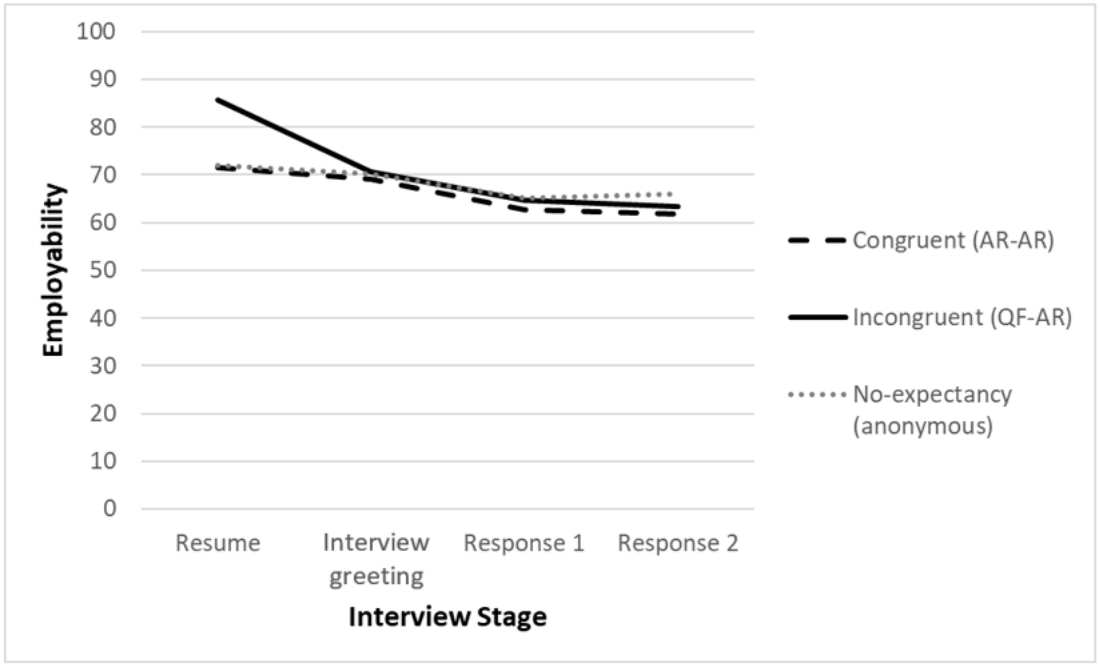
Employability of the L1 Spanish Applicant in Each Condition Throughout the Interview



The same analysis for the L1 Arabic applicant (illustrated in Figure 5) revealed a statistically significant main effect for expectation condition, $F(1.59, 85.80) = 3.60$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = .063$, a significant main effect for time, $F(2.04, 110.05) = 21.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .285$, and a significant two-way interaction, $F(4.56, 246.31) = 6.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .104$, which was explored through tests of interaction effects. The candidate depicted through the L1 Québec French resume was significantly more employable than the candidate presented in the anonymous resume, $M_{diff} = +13.53$, $t(54) = 4.51$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.61$, and the L1 Arabic resume, $M_{diff} = +14.04$, $t(54) = 5.60$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.75$, but there were no differences between conditions throughout the rest of the interview process, $t(54) < 1.50$, $p > .139$, $d < 0.20$. To summarize, the negative expectation violation established in the resume stage did not impact the employability ratings of the L1 Spanish or L1 Arabic applicants at any point during the interview.

Figure 5

Employability of the L1 Arabic Applicant in Each Condition Throughout the Interview



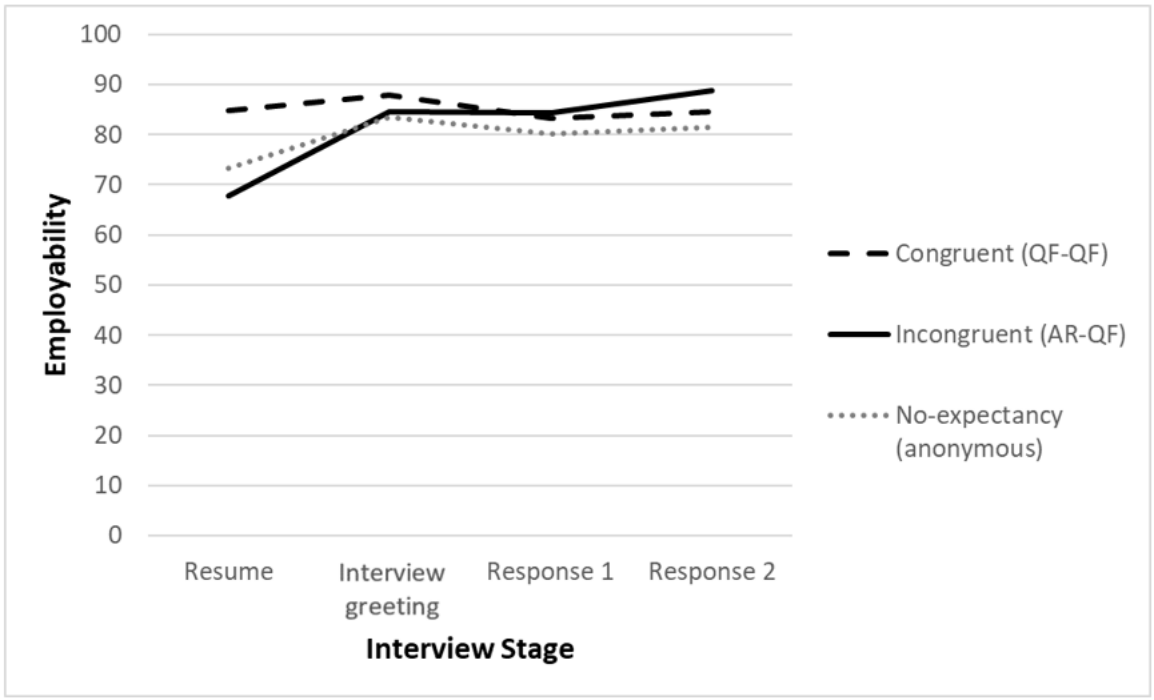
Positive Expectation Violation

The L1 Québec French applicant, who was presented as an L1 Arabic speaker in the incongruent condition, illustrated a positive expectation violation scenario where a presumed L2 French applicant speaks L1 French, positively surprising the interviewers. The analysis of the L1 Québec French applicant (illustrated in Figure 6) revealed a statistically significant main effect for expectation condition, $F(2, 108) = 5.23$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .088$, a significant main effect for time, $F(1.94, 104.91) = 16.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .237$, and a significant two-way interaction, $F(4.21, 227.41) = 10.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .162$, which was explored through tests of interaction effects. Once again, when considering the expectation condition, the L1 Québec French resume depicted a significantly more employable candidate than the anonymous resume, $M_{diff} = +11.53$, $t(54) = 4.23$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.57$, and the L1 Arabic resume, $M_{diff} = +17.04$, $t(54) = 5.88$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.79$. Following the interview greeting, the candidate depicted through the L1 Québec French resume (congruent condition) remained significantly more employable than the anonymous candidate (no-expectancy), $M_{diff} = +4.49$, $t(54) = 2.80$, $p = .021$, $d = 0.38$, or the one depicted as an L1 Arabic speaker (incongruent), $M_{diff} = +3.38$, $t(54) = 2.47$, $p = .050$, $d = 0.33$. However, at the final evaluation, the L1 Québec French speaker was most employable in the incongruent condition, eliciting significantly higher evaluations in this scenario than in the no-expectancy condition, $M_{diff} = +7.40$, $t(54) = 2.63$, $p = .033$, $d = 0.35$, but not in the congruent condition, $M_{diff} = +4.38$, $t(54) = 1.91$, $p = .061$, $d = 0.26$.[1] To summarize, the positive expectation violation had an effect on employability ratings for the L1 Québec French applicant. In the final evaluation episode, this applicant was rated more employable if she was initially presented as an L2 French speaker than if she was introduced through an anonymous resume (i.e., with no expectations manipulated). Overall, the results for the second research question suggest that violating

expectations positively rather than negatively may impact employability perceptions of job applicants.

Figure 6

Employability of the L1 Québec French Applicant in Each Condition Throughout the Interview



Violated Speech Expectations and Employability

While the second research question investigated employability perceptions based on raters' expectations of applicants' status as an L1 or L2 speaker in three experimental conditions, it did not take into account which speech characteristics raters were expecting from each applicant, nor whether the extent to which they were "surprised" by these speech characteristics was related to their hiring decisions. The third research question therefore explored the relationships between violations of speech expectations and employability evaluations, particularly for counter-stereotypical individuals (i.e., those who the listener perceives to speak

better or worse than the "typical" speaker of that social group). This analysis focused on the incongruent scenario as it was the condition experimentally designed to prompt the largest "surprise" effect and elicit the greatest violations of speech expectations. For this analysis, expectation difference scores were derived by subtracting the comprehensibility, accent prestige, and accentedness ratings assigned at the resume stage from each of the corresponding ratings given during the interview, where a larger positive score indicated that a candidate's speech turned out to be easier to understand and/or was more standard or less accented than expected. As summarized in Table 3, the L2 speakers' ratings consistently decreased from the resume-created expectation of an L1 speaker, whereas the L1 Québec French speaker's ratings consistently increased after the resume-created expectation of an L2 French speaker. To explore whether a counter-stereotypical job candidate's chance of being hired might be associated with how much the interviewer is (positively or negatively) "surprised" by their speech, Pearson correlations were then conducted between these expectation difference scores and employability ratings at each interview timepoint (Greeting, Response 1, Response 2) in the incongruent scenario.

Table 3

Speech Expectation Violations Calculated as Difference Scores Between Speech Expectations (Resume) and Actual Speech Ratings at Each Interview Stage in the Incongruent Scenario

		Greeting	Response 1	Response 2
Language	Measure	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
L1 Spanish	Comprehensibility	–35.91 (27.06)	–42.42 (28.33)	–47.04 (27.61)
	Accent Prestige	–40.96 (29.26)	–44.47 (32.21)	–49.38 (30.42)
	Accentedness	–46.04 (28.80)	–50.98 (29.69)	–50.27 (31.15)
L1 Arabic	Comprehensibility	–25.53 (26.92)	–34.38 (25.93)	–33.11 (27.95)
	Accent Prestige	–32.42 (30.41)	–43.09 (28.25)	–40.67 (30.37)
	Accentedness	–36.49 (29.11)	–45.42 (28.88)	–42.58 (29.17)
L1 Québec French	Comprehensibility	36.51 (28.75)	36.91 (28.87)	37.75 (29.60)
	Accent Prestige	40.16 (30.82)	38.91 (30.28)	39.84 (32.05)
	Accentedness	39.82 (25.87)	38.31 (23.81)	39.33 (25.27)

Note. Negative numbers indicate that the speaker's speech was less comprehensible, less standard, and more accented than expected at the resume stage.

As shown in Table 4, several medium-to-large associations emerged between employability and expectation violations of comprehensibility and accent prestige, but only for the L2 French applicants. These associations were all positive in valence, but they represented two cooccurring negative trends, whereby greater expectation violations (i.e., larger negative difference scores) were associated with lower (i.e., less favorable) eventual hiring evaluations. Put differently, the Arabic and Spanish speakers of L2 French were attributed lower

employability ratings at each interview stage when their speech tended to be perceived as less comprehensible and less standard than originally presumed from the L1 Québec French resume. These associations seemed to be strongest in the interview response stages compared to the interview greeting. These relationships are depicted graphically in Figure 7 for comprehensibility (top) and accent prestige (bottom) at the final evaluation episode (Response 2), where the more L2 speakers negatively violated expectations of comprehensibility and accent prestige (a larger negative score), the lower employability ratings they tended to receive. There were only weak associations between expectation violations of accentedness and employability, and only after the L2 speakers' interview responses.[2]

Table 4

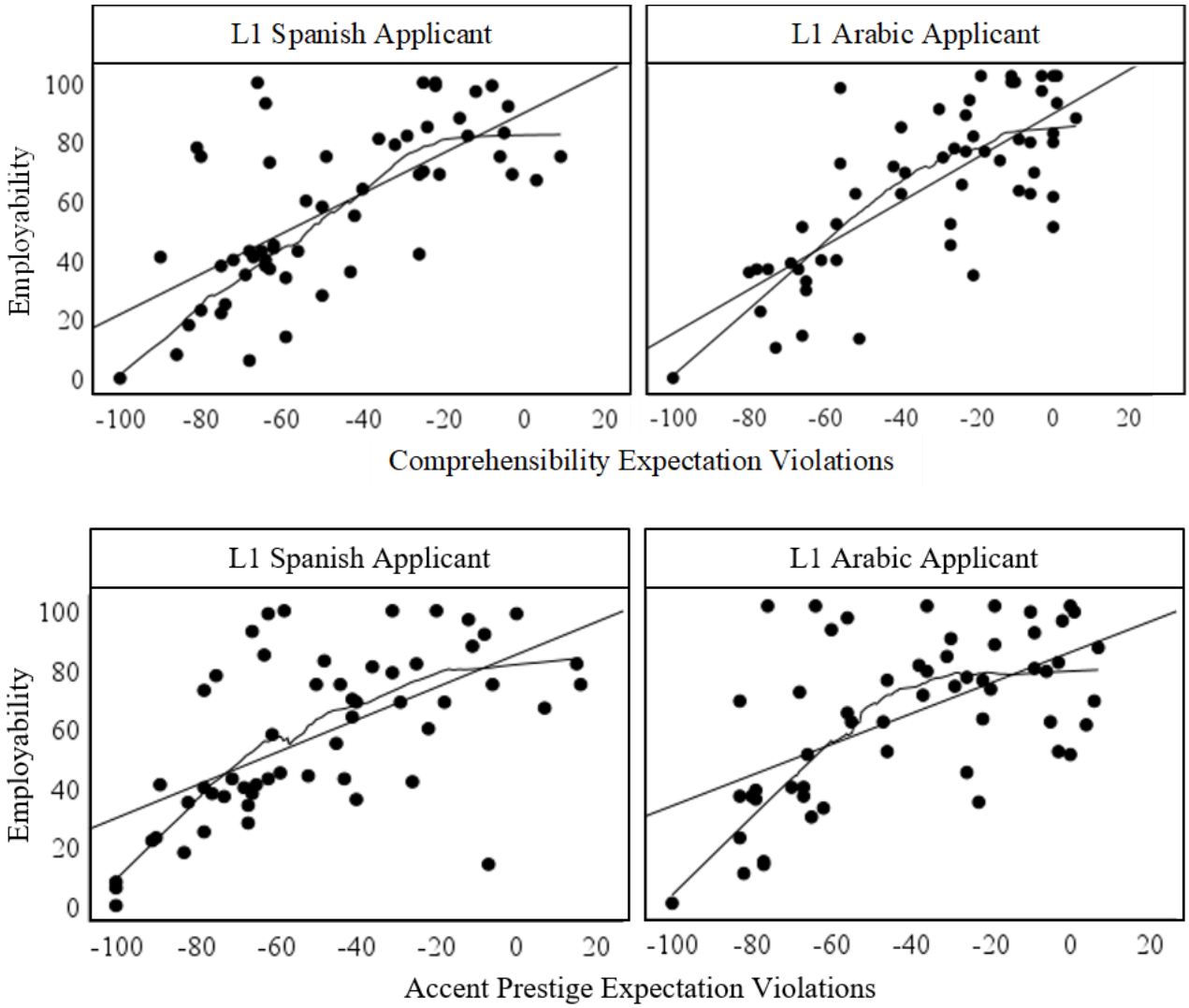
Relationships Between Violations of Speech Expectations and Ratings of Employability at Different Interview Stages in the Incongruent Scenario

	Interview stage		
Expectation violations	Greeting	Response 1	Response 2
L1 Spanish applicant			
Comprehensibility	**.63**	**.75**	**.68**
Accent prestige	**.36**	**.62**	**.61**
Accentedness	–.06	**.33**	**.30**
L1 Arabic applicant			
Comprehensibility	**.50**	**.60**	**.75**
Accent prestige	**.30**	**.45**	**.58**
Accentedness	.04	**.33**	**.38**
L1 Québec French applicant			
Comprehensibility	–.20	–.02	.16
Accent prestige	–.23	–.08	.16
Accentedness	.01	–.07	.13

Note. Correlation coefficients exceeding the benchmark for a small effect ($r \geq |.25|$) are bolded.

Figure 7

Scatterplots of Raters' Employability Evaluations as a Function of their Violated Expectations of Comprehensibility (Top Panel) and Accent Prestige (Bottom Panel) at the Final Interview Stage (Response 2), Separately for the L1 Spanish and L1 Arabic Applicants, with the Linear and Loess Trendlines Illustrating the Best Fit to the Data



To summarize, positively violated speech expectations appeared to not be related to the L1 Québec French applicant's employability, meaning that when her speech turned out to be

perceived "better" than expected, this did not necessarily play a role in her chances of being hired. However, for the L2 French applicants, representing negative violation scenarios, lower employability evaluations were most strongly associated with being harder to understand and speaking a less standard variety of French than expected at the resume stage. Put differently, whereas speaking in a more socially desirable way than initially expected might not improve one's chances of being hired, speaking in a less desirable way could hurt one's chances.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to extend prior work on the expectation violation theory to a more realistic interview scenario (with expert raters and multiple stages of the hiring process), exploring how French speakers from various backgrounds compare in their employability and whether listeners' resume-based expectations of the applicants impact hiring decisions. The findings showed that Québec listeners with HR experience preferred L1 Québec French speakers to L2 French speakers from Arabic or Spanish backgrounds at each stage of the hiring process for a waitress position. When manipulating expectations, post-interview hiring decisions of the L2 speakers did not differ whether their resume was anonymous, depicted their identity as an L2 speaker, or portrayed a local Québécois applicant. On the other hand, the L1 Québec French speaker had the greatest chance of being hired when her resume initially depicted an L1 Arabic speaker but her Québécois accent subsequently positively exceeded raters' expectations. More specifically, in these counter-stereotypical situations, lower employability ratings were related to negatively violated expectations of speech (in terms of comprehensibility and accent prestige), such as when the job applicant was more difficult to understand and spoke a less prestigious language variety than expected initially.

Employability of L1 and L2 French Job Applicants

The goal of the first research question was to determine how L2 French job applicants from different L1 backgrounds (Spanish and Arabic) and an L1 Québec French applicant would compare in employability evaluations for a waitress position when they apply in a typical interview scenario, where their speech matches their expected identity from the resume (congruent condition). Although all applicants provided comparable responses to the same interview questions, both L2 speakers were considered less employable (by 19–24 points on average) than the L1 Québec French applicant, which reflects a well-documented hiring bias favoring L1 applicants (Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Rakić et al., 2011; Roessel et al., 2019). While the L1 Spanish waitress applicant in Lindberg and Trofimovich (2023) was also evaluated as significantly less employable on average than the L1 French applicants, as judged by nonexpert raters (i.e., university students), this study further confirms that this hiring bias is replicated among individuals with HR experience who are currently invested in hiring practices. The L1 Québec French listeners' preference for an L1-speaking candidate might arise because they generally ascribe more social prestige to members of their own group and speakers of their own French variety (Chalier, 2018; Pustka et al., 2019; Šebková et al., 2020), favor standard-accented speakers for jobs requiring substantial communication skills (Spence et al., 2022), or experience little struggle understanding L1 speakers (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Indeed, the L2 speakers were judged to speak a less standard French (with average accent prestige ratings between 43 and 59 on a 100-point scale) and to be less comprehensible (with average comprehensibility ratings ranging from 47 to 63), compared to the L1 speaker who overall had a more prestigious accent (92) and was more comprehensible (93). This would suggest then that applicants' L1/L2 status and their speech characteristics were prioritized in hiring decisions, or

that the L2 speakers' accents distracted listeners from processing (and rewarding) the content of their interview responses (Mai & Hoffmann, 2014).

Further contributing to Lindberg and Trofimovich's (2023) findings which solely focused on Spanish-accented L2 French applicants, this study also demonstrated that an L1 Arabic applicant was perceived to be similar in her employability to the L1 Spanish applicant, suggesting that at least in the Québec context, there may be little preference for specific L2 applicants based on their L1 background or ethnicity. However, this would need to be investigated further in future studies that integrate more linguistic profiles among the L2 speakers seeking employment. For now, while generally positive views toward Latinos have been documented in Québec (Armony, 2017), it appears that L1 Arabic speakers are viewed in a similar light, at least for a customer-facing entry-level job in Québec. Indeed, Beaulieu et al. (2022b) recently showed that L1 Québec French speakers have similar (generally neutral to positive) attitudes toward L2 French Latinx and Middle Eastern individuals.

When considering the time course of evaluations, the L1 Québec French applicant's first impression in the interview (accent-only evaluation of a greeting) was enough to significantly increase her employability, whereas the L2 applicants' first impression did not change listeners' initial resume-based hiring decisions. This is consistent with Hansen et al.'s (2018) findings where the competence and employability of a congruent L1 candidate (i.e., a German-looking individual speaking with a standard German accent) increased after a brief interview greeting, whereas this was not the case for the congruent L2 candidate (i.e., a Turkish-looking person speaking a Turkish-accented German). In addition, the final hiring decision for the L1 Québec French applicant was similar to her resume evaluation, whereas the L2 speakers' final evaluations were significantly worse than their initial assessments, despite the consistent quality

of their interview responses across time. If listeners indeed prioritized applicants' speech over their job qualifications (e.g., work experience, education) and interview responses, as discussed above, it is possible that the decrease in evaluations of the L2 applicants' employability was tied to a decrease in how their speech (in terms of comprehensibility, accent prestige, and accentedness) was perceived over time. Post hoc paired-samples *t* tests confirmed that the ratings of both L2 applicants' comprehensibility and accent prestige decreased over time from the greeting to the final evaluation ($t > 1.98$, $p < .050$, $d > 0.26$). Thus, listeners may not have adapted to the applicants' speech over the course of the interview, as might be expected (Mai & Hoffmann, 2014), but instead continued to struggle with understanding the applicants and to focus on how their accent differed from a perceived standard language variety, which may have disadvantaged both L2 applicants in their final evaluations.

The Role of Expectations in Employability Assessments

The goal of the second research question was to determine whether perceptions of each individual speaker's employability would vary under different expectation conditions (congruent, incongruent, no-expectancy) at different points during the hiring process. Focusing first on the resume-screening stage, even though all resumes depicted equally qualified candidates, the L1 Québec French resume was consistently considered the most employable in every occasion, preferred by 14–17 points to the L2 resumes and by 12–16 points to the anonymous resumes. Consistent with prior findings demonstrating listeners' preference for resumes describing local candidates (Derous et al., 2014; Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2012), for job candidates with familiar, local names (Cotton et al., 2008), and for applicants with Canadian education and experience (Oreopoulos, 2011), listeners appeared to similarly favor the applicant whom they could identify most certainly as being from Québec. To prevent certain applicants from having this advantage

based on their social identity alone, employers may therefore wish to consider anonymous resume screening (Åslund & Skans, 2012). To draw from this study's findings, average employability ratings for each speaker's anonymous resume were comparable, ranging narrowly between 70 and 73 on a 100-point scale, demonstrating a consistent qualification-based assessment of all speakers regardless of their L1/L2 status.

Second, when considering evaluations based on an interview greeting (i.e., an accent-based first impression), the L2 French applicants elicited similar employability ratings whether their greeting was heard in the congruent, incongruent, or no-expectancy scenario, contrary to the negative expectation violations in Hansen et al. (2018), where an incongruent L2 applicant was rated as less employable than a congruent L2 applicant. Although contrary to what would be predicted by the expectation violation theory (Burgoon & Burgoon, 2001), these findings should be interpreted in a positive light, as they suggest that if an applicant's first interview impression does not convey the social identity expected by the interviewer, this will not necessarily taint first impressions of her job suitability, at least as evaluated by listeners with some HR experience. Turning to the L1 Québec French applicant, she was significantly more employable in the congruent scenario compared to the incongruent and anonymous scenarios, contrary to Hansen et al. (2018) who found no differences in employability between the incongruent and congruent scenarios after their L1 speaker's greeting. It could be that for first impressions, listeners determined employability based on a "sum of the elements" reasoning, where a candidate with education and work experience in Québec plus a Québec French accent (as in the congruent scenario) was considered a more desirable employee than someone whose greeting implied that she was a local but whose resume-based qualifications listed no experience in

Québec (as in the incongruent scenario) or an unknown amount of Québec experience (as in the anonymous scenario).

Lastly, in addition to Lindberg and Trofimovich (2023), this study is novel in that it investigated the expectation violation theory in an extended interview context, to see if expectation violations would influence hiring decisions beyond a greeting, after two spontaneous content-based interview responses. While previous research has only focused on expectation violations during first impressions (Hansen et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2018), this phenomenon would only be a practical concern if the effects persisted for post-interview hiring decisions. Regarding the L2 applicants, although their final evaluations in the incongruent scenario were descriptively lower than in the no-expectancy condition (–3.89 points for the Spanish applicant and –2.62 points for the Arabic applicant), which would be expected from a negative expectation violation (Burgoon & LePoire, 1993), there were no statistically significant differences between any condition. Therefore, this study confirms the null results from Lindberg and Trofimovich (2023) for negative expectation violations involving L2 French speakers, suggesting that violations of L1/L2 status may not be as detrimental to interview outcomes as previously presumed (Aboud et al., 1974, Hansen et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2018).

As for the L1 Québec French speaker's final evaluations, she was significantly more employable in the incongruent condition (i.e., after presumed to be an L2 speaker) than in the no-expectancy scenario. This difference is important as it shows that expectations are indeed operative, where inducing expectations yields more extreme results than when expectations are not manipulated (Burgoon & LePoire, 1993), and confirms previous findings where violating expectations in a positive way appear to lead to favorable hiring decisions (Jussim et al., 1987). Nevertheless, there were no differences between the congruent and incongruent expectation

conditions by the end of the interview. Practically speaking, this finding would suggest that after speaking for about 1 minute in response to job-specific interview questions, an L2 French applicant who speaks like an L1 Québec French speaker (i.e., a stereotypically incongruent applicant) would have an equal chance of being hired as an L1 Québec French applicant who grew up in Québec (i.e., a stereotypically congruent applicant). This aligns with Beaulieu et al.'s (2022b) study on Québec French speakers' attitudes toward immigrants which found that locals evaluated speakers of L1 French similarly in their personal characteristics (e.g., leadership, initiative, education) regardless of whether they were visually depicted as individuals of Caucasian descent or visible ethnic minorities.

Taken together, when focusing on the employability of intermediate-level L2 French speakers in Québec, the present findings suggest that although these speakers are disadvantaged at the resume screening stage, any expectations of their L1/L2 status evoked during that stage appear to have little impact on their perceived employability based on first impressions and after a series of interview responses. Furthermore, even though a Caucasian Québec-raised L1 speaker makes the best first impression within the initial few seconds of an interview, a presumed L2 candidate who subsequently sounds like an L1 speaker of a local variety has the potential to impress interviewers, possibly leading to a more favorable final hiring decision.

Employability Perceptions and Violations of Speech Expectations

To take a more in-depth look at expectation violations, the goal of the third research question was to investigate if violations of speech expectations (in terms of a speaker's comprehensibility, accent prestige, and accentedness) were related to listeners' perceptions of applicants' employability. This analysis focused on counter-stereotypical individuals (i.e., those who appear to be members of the majority L1 Québec French community but speak L2 French,

or those who appear to be immigrants but speak L1 French). Not only do these individuals represent the most extreme cases of expectation violations, but they are rarely studied despite increasing global mobility making these incongruent scenarios more common. Furthermore, this analysis went beyond a typical approach of comparing experimentally manipulated expectation scenarios, as done for the second research question here and in prior work (Hansen et al., 2017b, 2018; Jussim et al., 1987), by capturing the specific speech expectations of each listener at the resume stage, which accounts for their individual differences in how they interpreted the situation. As explained by the adaptation level theory (Helson, 1959), individuals' judgments of speech are based on their unique previous experiences with similar-sounding speakers, where the unique mental frameworks constructed from those prior experiences predict these individuals' future experiences with other speakers' speech (Planalp & Rivers, 1996; Stein, 1992). Therefore, it was important to capture listeners' initial expectations, as they may be violated more or less extremely depending on each person's past encounters or social norms from which their expectations are formed (Burgoon, 1993).

When considering the incongruent L2 applicants who spoke in a less socially desirable way than expected from their resumes, the present findings showed that violating the expectation of a speaker's comprehensibility had the strongest relationship with their employability at each interview stage. In other words, when L2 speakers sounded less comprehensible than they were expected to be, their employability was more likely to be downgraded. Similarly, associations with accent prestige also emerged, in the sense that if L2 speakers' accent was perceived to be less standard than expected, they received lower employability ratings. In line with Dragojevic et al. (2019), where L2 speakers were attributed less competence when their accent was stronger than expected, a similar effect emerged here for L2 applicants' employability if their accent was

considered less prestigious than initially expected. However, unlike listener expectations of L2 applicants' comprehensibility and accent prestige, similar expectations of applicants' accentedness showed only weak associations with their eventual evaluations, and only in response to longer speech samples (interview responses). Therefore, although HR professionals generally tend to prioritize hiring the least accented applicants over those who communicate most comprehensibly (Almeida et al., 2015; Lockwood, 2012), when it comes to expectation violations, it is the type of an L2 speaker's accent (in terms of its departure from the listener's perceived standard variety) and the amount of listeners' processing effort (in terms of the degree of effort required to understand the speaker, compared to an initial expectation) that appear to be potentially most detrimental for that speaker. The suggested practical importance of comprehensibility over accentedness for L2 speaker evaluations in real-world contexts can also be supported through recent findings which show that the extent to which local francophones evaluate social acceptability of L2 French speakers (e.g., as members of Québec's society) is positively associated with L2 speakers' comprehensibility rather than accentedness (Tekin & Trofimovich, 2023). Taken together, these findings highlight the key role of comprehensibility (and listeners' expectations of it) in social and professional evaluations of L2 French speakers.

When considering the incongruent L1 applicant who spoke in a more socially desirable way than expected from her resume, there were no associations which approached the benchmark for a weak relationship, suggesting that violations of speech expectations were generally unrelated to her employability. Taken together with the results from the second research question which showed that a positive expectation violation for the L1 speaker led to the highest employability ratings, it could be that this speaker's increased employability in the incongruent scenario was not necessarily due to (positive) violations of her expected speech

characteristics, but perhaps simply due to her identity as an L1 Québec French speaker. Put simply, listeners were expecting an immigrant L2 French applicant but instead heard a candidate who shared their L1 identity, which was perhaps more important than her speech being judged as "better" than expected. This speculation is supported through listeners' comments which highlight how they may have prioritized the L1 speaker's Québec identity over her speaking skills when judging employability. For example, in the incongruent condition where she was expected to be an L1 Arabic speaker, one rater at the resume stage appeared to be more concerned with where she learned French than her actual language proficiency (e.g., *Si elle a appris le français au Québec, elle aura un standard avec lequel la clientèle sera familière*, "If she learned French in Québec, she will have a standard with which the clientele will be familiar"). Once the expectation of an L2 speaker was violated when listeners heard her greeting, they expressed their surprise with her spoken French, in the sense that it unexpectedly reflected a Québec variety (e.g., *Étonnement! Son français est impeccable et de standard québécois. A ce stade, elle demeure parmi les candidates retenues pour ce poste*, "Astonishment! Her French is impeccable and of Québec standard. At this stage, she remains among the candidates selected for this position"). Subsequently, after hearing her respond to interview questions, another listener also considered how well her French reflected a Québécois identity when evaluating her employability (*Son usage du français me semble typiquement québécois*, "Her use of French seems typically Québécois"). Thus, it seems that the L1 Québec French speaker was most employable in the incongruent condition not because her speech was more comprehensible or sounded more standard than expected but because she simply unexpectedly evoked the image of a typical Québécois. However, a follow-up study with a more in-depth qualitative analysis examining listeners' justifications for their ratings would be needed to confirm this speculation.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite this study's novel approach to examining expectation violations in an extended interview context, there are several limitations which highlight avenues for future research. First, while all listeners had HR expertise, other individual characteristics or beliefs that could potentially influence their hiring decisions within each condition were not accounted for. Therefore, future research could focus on individual differences across listeners—for example, in terms of their beliefs that accents reflect an applicant's personal characteristics (Hansen, 2020), that accents are easy to pick up, modify, or drop (Dragojevic et al., 2019), or that some social groups are more dominant over others in society (Hansen & Dovidio, 2016)—to further clarify the underlying mechanisms driving any negative evaluations of L2-speaking job applicants, particularly in expectation-incongruent scenarios. Another listener individual difference to consider could be the size of their language repertoire, to see if biases might differ between monolingual and multilingual recruiters. Second, while some listener comments were highlighted to discuss the findings, the results were purely based on quantitative data, limiting our understanding of listeners' evaluative behavior. Future studies should therefore consider incorporating a qualitative analysis that examines listeners' explanations for their evaluations to clarify what factors they prioritize in their hiring decisions. Third, while this study controlled the quality of applicants' interview responses to preclude the content from influencing differences in employability, future studies could manipulate response quality to investigate, for example, how L2 speakers are evaluated in different expectation conditions when they provide higher or lower quality responses than L1 speakers. Finally, the present findings are limited to a Québec francophone context, so it would be important to replicate this study in other settings (e.g., in Ontario where French is a minority language), focusing on other job types (e.g., higher vs. lower

status jobs or those with a low communication requirement) and conducting job interviews in other languages.

Practical Implications

The present findings underscore practical implications for both L2 French-speaking job applicants in Québec and for L1 French HR professionals. First, because L1 Québec French speakers with HR experience generally preferred the resumes that depicted a Québécois identity, and even explicitly acknowledged (in their qualitative comments post-rating) an applicant's knowledge of Québec's culture and language, L2 speakers searching for a job in Québec may wish to highlight in their job application their local or otherwise francophone-relevant experience (e.g., in terms of education, prior work, French learning). Second, as expectation violations of comprehensibility (i.e., where a speaker was perceived to be harder to understand than expected initially) were most strongly related to listener perceptions of employability, L2 French teachers could focus on learners' development of comprehensible speech over accent reduction to enhance local residents' perceptions of L2 speakers in professional roles in their community (Tekin & Trofimovich, 2023). Classroom interventions targeting appropriate interview behaviors and discourse strategies as well as activities contrasting high- and low-quality interview responses could also prove to be effective in improving L2 speakers' interview skills and facilitating more effective communication in workplace situations (Louw et al., 2010).

Most importantly, it is necessary to enhance L1 speakers' awareness of potential language bias, so as to diminish the impact of extraneous variables, such as a speaker's appearance, accent, or provenance, in evaluations of immigrant professionals. Because recruiters with lower levels of exposure to diversity tend to be most concerned with applicants not sharing the same social identity as the workplace majority (Almeida et al., 2015), diversity training,

contact activities with L2 speakers, and awareness-raising and perspective-taking interventions might be useful for minimizing negative expectations that create incongruencies (Hansen et al., 2014; Subtirelu & Lindemann, 2014). For example, workplace interventions targeting accent bias could include lectures and discussions on the implications of implicit bias, roleplays, and positive counter-stereotype imaging, where evaluations are preceded by imagining an immigrant L2 speaker who easily and successfully communicates with customers (Metinyurt et al., 2021). In addition, with a shortage of instructional materials addressing accent bias in Canadian university HR programs (O'Brien et al., 2022), similar activities and interventions should be included in HR university curricula as well, such as training modules on how expectations are formed and their influence on perceptions, mock job interview roleplays, or narrative sharing of perceived discrimination experiences in the workplace (Trofimovich et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This study extended prior research on violations of listeners' expectations to a longer French interview context, investigating the employability of L2 French applicants when their speech is perceived as more or less desirable than expected. L2 French speakers were found to be consistently less employable than an L1 Québec French speaker for a waitress position, where L2 speakers' ratings decreased over the course of the interview. However, for both L2 speakers, their chance of being hired post-interview was not influenced by their actual or presumed identity portrayed through their resume. Finally, when L2 speakers were less comprehensible and spoke a less standard French than had been expected during the resume screening stage, they were more likely to be downgraded in their employability. This study's findings highlight the role of speech in determining the employability of L2-speaking job applicants and call for further

work on people's reactions and social perceptions of others whose social identity is ambiguous or incongruent with initial expectations.

Notes

1. Identical analyses for the European French speaker presented through an L1 Spanish resume, which also represented a positive expectation violation scenario, can be found in Appendix F.
2. Despite speech expectation violations being less extreme for stereotypical individuals (congruent condition) or for those whose background is unknown (anonymous condition), identical analyses for these conditions also showed no associations for the L1 Québec French applicant (see Appendix G for results). The congruent L2 speakers displayed similar (but weak) associations to those shown by the incongruent L2 speakers. On the other hand, for the L2 speakers presented through anonymous resumes, there were no relationships between speech expectation violations and employability, as might be expected from a condition that did not prompt speech expectations.

Connecting Studies 1 and 2

While Study 1 focused on how listeners react toward accented speakers in an employment context, Study 2 shifts the focus to the speakers' perspective. Listeners' expectations and evaluative behaviors resulting from accent bias do not occur independently of speakers' own awareness of the stereotypes that others may hold toward their speech. Such meta-perceptions or meta-stereotypes (Vorauer et al., 1998) are important to explore as they can influence speakers' behaviors, but they are largely underexplored in the literature on accent bias in the workplace, making up only about 10% of articles according to a recent review (Hideg et al., 2022). It has been documented that accented speakers are aware that their accent may elicit a negative reaction from their interlocutor (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a, 2010b), and this anticipation of stigmatization can lead to negative outcomes in the workplace, such as losing a sense of belonging, internalizing the stereotypes, avoiding interactions, or experiencing anxiety and identity issues (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b; Harrison, 2013; Kim et al., 2019; Neeley, 2013; Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). Therefore, Study 2 fills this literature gap while responding to Hideg et al.'s (2022) call for more work that "explores the 'internal life' of speakers with accents in the workplace to understand how they make sense of and react to stereotypes surrounding their accent status" (p. 225).

Study 2 takes a mixed-method approach by surveying L2 French employees in Québec from various linguistic backgrounds about their perceived discrimination at work through scalar-based and open-ended questions. Study 2 contributes to contextualizing the results of Study 1 by highlighting L2 speakers' experiences and consequences (beyond being less likely to get hired) that may only be understood from their own perspective. While findings from Study 1 are important in discovering potential reasons for and suggesting possible solutions to biased

behavior toward L2 applicants and employees, this research should be complemented by perspectives of L2 speakers themselves, as their affective and behavioral reactions intertwine with listeners' reactions and together impact their career outcomes (Russo et al., 2017).

Chapter 3: Study 2

L2 French Employees' Expectation of Bias and Their Experiences with Perceived Accent Discrimination in the Workplace

It is common for second language (L2) speakers to think about how others may view them through a stereotypical lens (Vorauer et al., 2000), and L2 speakers are often aware that others may judge them based on their accent (Derwing, 2003; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a). L2-speaking job applicants and employees especially tend to perceive themselves as a target for accent bias (Wated & Sanchez, 2006), and with a mindset focused on their stereotyped status, they are more likely to encounter affective and behavioral consequences that could shape their future interactions and experiences (Pinel, 1999). With this awareness of others' perceptions, L2 speakers may experience linguistic insecurity, viewing their speech as a barrier that restricts them from upward mobility. This may not only erode their confidence, leaving them with limited motivation to seek professional advancement opportunities (Harrison, 2013) or to engage in work interactions (Kim et al., 2019), but can also lead to experiencing more stress in the workplace (Wated & Sanchez, 2006). Thus, expectations of being judged by their accent can have important implications for how L2 speakers react and experience stereotype-relevant situations, such as job interviews, work meetings, or interactions with colleagues and customers.

Research in the area of accent bias would benefit from moving beyond the typical approach of examining bias through listener judgments by also considering the speaker's perspective. As an extension of Study 1 which focused on how listeners respond to L2 French speakers, this study explored how L2 French speakers' perceptions of negative or stereotypical attitudes may shape their experience of discrimination. Although Study 1 targeted listeners' expectations (reflecting various stereotypical judgments) and their potential impact on L2

speaker evaluations, it has not yet been established if the speakers are aware of these stereotypes or expectations that others have about their speech. Findings from this study therefore highlight potential outcomes of L2 speakers' perceived stigmatization in the workplace, including its behavioral and affective consequences. Finally, anecdotes of L2 French speakers' experiences with accent discrimination in workplace contexts provide a snapshot of their "internal life" as an L2-accented employee, offering an insight into how they are affected by stereotypes.

Background Literature

Stereotypes have the power to influence people's views of the world, their self-perceptions, their choices, and even their behavior (Pinel & Paulin, 2005), which we can begin to understand through the concept of meta-perceptions, defined as "individuals' judgment of how others perceive them" (Hideg et al., 2022, p. 223). Meta-stereotypes are a certain type of meta-perception representing the stereotypes that individuals believe a particular outgroup holds about their group (Hideg et al., 2022). While theoretically meta-stereotypes can be positive or negative, they typically encompass negative perceptions (Vorauer et al., 1998). To take an example of meta-stereotypes from the French-speaking world, Belgians (nonstandard French speakers) believe that standard French speakers stereotype them as being less linguistically skilled and less competent (Yzerbyt et al., 2005). Similarly, Acadians perceive that Québec French speakers view their way of speaking French as unacceptable and shameful (Noël & Beaton, 2010).

Turning to L2 speakers' meta-stereotypes, Skachkova's (2007) oral narrative research on the accounts of the experiences of immigrant women professors in the United States revealed that many of these academics felt that their competence and credibility were judged based on their accent. For example, one Asian respondent observed that "[a] foreign appearance accompanied by an accent may immediately discount an instructor's credibility" (p. 707). These

feelings of incompetence were fostered through the stereotypes that students had of immigrant women, expressed through statements such as "You are just a Japanese woman. What are you talking about? You know nothing about America" (p. 707). The European respondents in Skachkova's (2007) work expressed that initially they were not expected to be foreigners based on their appearance. However, as soon as their accent was detected, interlocutors would identify them as foreigners, acting as if they have trouble understanding them. These accounts not only reveal that L2 speakers are familiar with stereotypes about their speech, but also demonstrate that certain stereotypically incongruent speakers (European-born Caucasian participants speaking with an L2 accent) are aware of listeners' reactions to speech that violates appearance-based expectations. Clearly, people's reactions can reinforce a person's awareness and knowledge of stereotypes that exist regarding their accent.

Because of their awareness of how others perceive their accent, it is also not uncommon for L2 speakers to view themselves as a target for accent bias and other discriminatory behaviors. For example, in a study involving 1,500 L2 English speakers (from a Mandarin background) in the United States, 13% admitted to experiencing accent discrimination (Goto et al., 2002), while in another study with 18 L2 French speakers (all anglophones) in Canada, 14 individuals reported experiencing accent discrimination, with four stating it occurred on a regular basis (Freynet et al., 2018). Derwing (2003) also interviewed 100 adult immigrants in Alberta, Canada, who spoke L2 English with a noticeable accent about their experiences with discrimination based on their accent. A third of the respondents acknowledged being discriminated against, and over half felt they would be respected more if they had better English pronunciation. Their anecdotes further demonstrated how their L2 accents affected how much they were accepted, particularly impacting workplace interactions and relationships, as illustrated in the following example: "At

work – he wasn't comfortable with me, with my talking, and he didn't talk to me very often. I explain to him 'I need to practice.' He told me 'I don't care'" (p. 558). Others mentioned perceived devaluation during job interviews, such as "I was applying last year for a job. The employer didn't have a good impression of me because of my pronunciation" (p. 558). These struggles to form social relations in the workplace and be recognized as legitimate professionals also emerged from narratives during Harrison's (2013) interviews with practitioners in Australia who represented a variety of cultural backgrounds (e.g., Polish, Indian, Vietnamese). One participant admitted that she feels her competence for the position is constantly being judged: "The way that they speak to you sometimes, you feel a bit down because they don't treat you as a professional, but treat you as a second [class] citizen" (p. 198). Similarly, another participant indicated that those who have an accent different from the standard are often the ones who are blamed for any problems regarding miscommunication in the workplace: "I do believe that [if] you work as a frontline [worker] and you have an accent, you're more likely to be scapegoated in a lot of situations" (p. 198). Many also reported often dealing with clients or colleagues who were impatient toward them because of their accent.

L2 speakers' reports of accent discrimination such as these can also vary from person to person. For example, in a study of how L2 English speakers from various backgrounds (Asian, Latino, and European) experienced discrimination in the United States, Gluszek and Dovidio (2010b) found that the stronger participants perceived their accent to be, the more bias they reported experiencing. Furthermore, L2 speakers can also differ in the extent to which they focus on their stereotyped status—a concept known as stigma consciousness—and this can influence how sensitive they are to discriminatory behaviors (Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005). In other words, those who are high in stigma consciousness expect to be discriminated against and are

more likely to interpret others' reactions or behaviors toward them as discriminatory (Pinel, 1999, 2004).

Stigma consciousness is important to consider in relation to a person's level of perceived discrimination. Whether or not a speaker's perception accurately reflects their experiences, the more they think about stereotypes and perceive signs of disrespect with regards to their accent, the more likely they will exhibit certain affective and behavioral consequences that might be damaging to their experience in the workplace (Pinel, 1999). In terms of affective consequences, speakers' perceptions of experience with bias can foster feelings of exclusion (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b), which can impact one's psychological wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When a speaker feels as though they (or their linguistic group) are evaluated negatively as members of an outgroup, they may experience low self-esteem or other negative emotions and depressive symptoms (Kim et al., 2011; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997; Vorauer et al., 1998). For example, Wated and Sanchez (2006) showed that Spanish-accented employees in the United States who reported greater perceived accent-based discrimination experienced less job satisfaction and more work tension. In addition, L2 speakers who are highly conscious of stigma tend to have a weaker sense of belonging (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b). In workplace situations, if L2 speakers question their belonging, feel disrespected, or feel excluded from their work community, they may consider leaving their job or will not attempt to pursue employment in certain domains that require communication skills (Pinel & Paulin, 2005).

Indeed, when considering behavioral consequences, high stigma conscious individuals tend to exhibit avoidance or disengagement behaviors in perceived stigmatizing situations (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002; Pinel, 1999; Pinel et al., 2005). Derwing (2003) explains that when L2 speakers expect to face discrimination because of their accent, they tend to be less

likely to join a conversation, especially avoiding any interaction where they think they may experience bias. Although these avoidance behaviors remain to be investigated in an employment context, they could take the form of L2-accented employees abstaining from work interactions, disengaging during meetings, or passing on promotion or employment opportunities if they believe their accent would cause them to be stereotyped in those situations. For example, Neeley (2013) interviewed L2 English speakers at a high-tech company about their experiences of being L2 speakers in the workplace, where some participants mentioned how they would withdraw from discussions or avoid meetings altogether because of how first language (L1) English speakers might judge their accent: "I wanted to be a leader and I know that I have to talk in meetings but I became timid about my English and people listening to my mistakes and mispronunciations" (p. 489). Many participants also expressed concerns about limited job opportunities or advancement, where one employee claimed, "I worry that my English will be compared to better speakers, and they will get promoted and I won't" (p. 489). This concern may indeed be detrimental for L2 speakers if it prevents them from seeking professional advancement opportunities (Harrison, 2013).

The Current Study

As discussed previously, it is common for L2 speakers to think about how others stereotype them and their speech. If L2 speakers focus on their stereotyped status (as high stigma conscious individuals), expect to be devalued due to their L2 accent, and report high levels of perceived discrimination, they may experience various affective (e.g., feeling stressed and disrespected) and behavioral (e.g., avoiding certain jobs and interactions) consequences in workplace situations. While previous listener-focused studies have revealed various negative consequences for L2 speakers, such as their being less likely to get hired (Hansen et al., 2018;

Roessel et al., 2019), we currently know little about how L2 speakers internalize or respond to stereotypes and whether this leads to negative affective or behavioral outcomes for them in the workplace. Research on lived experiences of accent discrimination indeed warrants further attention as such insight would be important for improving intercultural relations and the wellbeing of L2-accented employees. Implications of this work would also be relevant for employers. For instance, if L2 speakers' perceived devaluation and discrimination contribute to their intent to quit an occupation or avoid pursuing a certain career, companies risk losing employees who may potentially be valuable to the intellectual and cultural makeup of the workplace. Finally, most studies on perceived accent discrimination focus on the experiences of L2 English speakers (Derwing, 2003; Goto et al., 2002; Wated & Sanchez, 2006), which highlights the need to consider the experiences of speakers with other L2 accents. While there exist some qualitative reports of L2 French speakers' perceived discriminatory experiences in Canada (Freynet et al., 2018), this work targets anglophones only and excludes employment contexts.

Considering these shortcomings, the goal of this study was therefore to extend Study 1 through a mixed-methods approach by focusing on L2 speakers' lived experiences with accent stigmatization in stereotype-relevant workplace situations and by examining possible consequences of these experiences that importantly extend beyond potential hiring disadvantages. To diversify the scope of speaker-focused research, this study targeted perceptions of workplace discrimination by L2 French speakers from various language backgrounds who were currently employed in Québec. Studying perceived discrimination is as important as researching objective occurrences of discrimination, because perceptions of oneself as a target of discrimination can in itself impact an employee's wellbeing (Sanchez & Brock,

1996; Wated & Sanchez, 2006). To provide a comprehensive perspective on perceived accent bias, this study thus covered its different dimensions, including meta-stereotypes (i.e., how L2 French speakers believe Québec French speakers stereotype them), stigma consciousness (i.e., extent to which L2 French speakers are aware of stereotypes), expectations of devaluation (i.e., extent to which they expect to be devalued or treated differently in workplace situations based on their L2 accent), and perceived accent discrimination (i.e., extent to which they perceive being treated differently at their job due to their L2 accent). The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What meta-stereotypes do L2 French speakers have regarding their accent and status as L2 French speakers in Québec?
2. Are L2 French speakers' stigma consciousness, expectations of devaluation, and perceived discrimination in the workplace related to affective and behavioral outcomes in their current workplace environment?

Method

Participants

Participants were 60 employees (47 females, 13 males) who were using L2 French for the majority of their job in Québec at the time of the study (M = 79.91% of the time, SD = 14.91). An a priori power analysis using G*Power3 (Faul et al., 2007) determined that a sample size of 60 was sufficient for two-tailed correlational analyses with a medium effect size (d = .35), alpha of .05, and power of .81. They were recruited through advertisements posted on various social media groups for professionals or for non-francophone communities (e.g., anglophones, newcomers) across Québec. Anyone who responded to the posting was selected to participate, as long as French was their second language and they were currently employed in Québec where

they spoke French for the majority of their job. Participants were between 19 and 59 years old (M = 28.82, SD = 9.51) and varied in their education level, where their highest degree was either a certificate (2), bachelor's degree (40), master's degree (13), or doctorate degree (5). Participants from Québec (n = 14) had lived in Québec for most of their life (M = 26.38 years, SD = 11.03) and had studied French for 20.71 years on average (SD = 9.51), speaking mainly English (12) but also Spanish (1) and Cantonese (1) as their L1s. For those who grew up outside Québec (n = 46), their length of residence in the province was 8.87 years on average (SD = 8.28), and they had studied French for an average of 11.55 years (SD = 9.59). While the majority also spoke English as their L1 (19), they represented 17 language backgrounds overall, including Spanish (5), Arabic (4), Farsi (3), Mandarin (2), and Russian (2).

Participants either worked full-time (31) or part-time (29), and while the majority were employed in Montréal (38), they also represented workplaces in other regions of Québec, such as Québec City (15), Laval (2), Boisbriand, Pointe-Claire, Saint-Lazare, Valleyfield, and Varennes. They had been working in French in Québec for 5.70 years on average (*range* = 0.20–40 years), where 78.67% of their current work colleagues were L1 French speakers (*range* = 21–100%). They represented multiple occupations, as displayed in Table 1, where their job types are categorized in hierarchical order based on the 10 broad occupational categories of the Government of Canada's National Occupational Classification (https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/Hierarchy).

Table 1

Participants' Jobs Categorized in Hierarchical Order by 10 Broad Occupational Categories

Occupation category	Number of participants	Example occupations
Management	6	Technical program manager; public relations manager; store manager
Business, finance, and administration	5	Human resources; consulting firm associate
Natural and applied science	13	IT specialist; epidemiologist; molecular biologist; civil engineer
Health	6	Occupational therapist; physiotherapist; nurse
Education, law, and social, community, and government services	9	Social worker; teacher; counselor
Art, culture, recreation, sports	3	Editor; journalist
Sales and service	16	Bartender; cashier; sales associate
Trades, transport, and equipment operators	1	Equipment maintenance
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	1	Quarry health/safety representative
Manufacturing and utilities	0	—

Materials

The materials included a battery of five brief questionnaires. For all questionnaires, participants indicated their (dis)agreement with each statement on a 100-point continuous slider scale between *strongly disagree* (0) and *strongly agree* (100), and were given optional comment boxes to explain their ratings or provide anecdotes. The 10-item stigma consciousness questionnaire for L2 French speakers in Québec (see Appendix H) measured the extent to which L2 French speakers focus on and feel self-conscious about stereotypes related to their status as an L2 speaker. This scale was created by modifying the original outgroup (women) and ingroup (men) labels from Pinel's (1999) stigma consciousness scale for women to "L2 French speakers" and "L1 Québec French speakers," respectively. As in the original questionnaire, to capture the extent of stigma consciousness, seven items required reverse-scoring, as in "I almost never think about the fact that I am an L2 French speaker when I interact with L1 Québec French speakers," whereas scalar directionality was retained for the remaining three items, as in "Most L1 Québec French speakers have a problem viewing L2 French speakers as equals."

The 12-item questionnaire focusing on expectation of devaluation measured participants' expectations of devaluation and discrimination in Québec workplace contexts due to their L2 French accent (see Appendix I). These items were inspired by and adapted from various expectation of stigmatization scales used in previous research (Derwing, 2003; Freynet et al., 2018; Freynet & Clément, 2019; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b; Link, 1987). Statements captured participants' expectations of how employees or job applicants who speak French like them are treated by employers, colleagues, or customers in Québec. Sample items included "Most employers in Québec will pass over the application of an L2 French speaker like me in favor of an L1 French speaker" and "Most customers in Québec would be happy to be served by an

employee with a French accent like mine." Five items, such as the latter, were reverse scored, whereas the remaining seven items retained their scalar directionality to capture expectation strength.

The 10-item perceived accent discrimination scale measured participants' perceived experiences of accent discrimination from speaking L2 French at their current workplace in Québec (see Appendix J). This scale was adapted from Wated and Sanchez's (2006) questionnaire on accent discrimination experienced by students who spoke English with a Spanish accent at their job. Items were therefore modified to discuss accents in French rather than accents in English. Sample statements included "At work, I do not get enough recognition because of my accent in French" and "At work, I feel that others exclude me from their activities because of my accent in French." All items retained their scalar directionality as in the original questionnaire, where larger scores indicated experiencing perceived accent discrimination at work more often.

The employment experiences questionnaire captured participants' workplace behaviors and affect without any explicit reference to their accent (see Appendix K). These items were motivated by previous studies which suggested that these behaviors and emotions could be potential outcomes of employees' perceived accent discrimination. Therefore, the five behavioral items included statements related to avoiding voicing opinions or ideas during work meetings (Derwing, 2003; Kim et al., 2019; Neeley, 2013), avoiding interactions with certain colleagues (Derwing, 2003; Kim et al., 2019), avoiding applying to certain jobs (Neeley, 2013), intending to leave their job (Pinel & Paulin, 2005), or avoiding leadership roles at work (Neeley, 2013). A sample behavioral item was "There are certain jobs in Québec that I avoid applying to because they require too much communication with customers." The five affective items included

statements related to lacking a sense of belonging at work (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b), feeling stressed at work (Wated & Sanchez, 2006), lacking confidence in professional skills (Harrison, 2013), feeling pessimistic about promotion opportunities at their job (Harrison, 2013; Neeley, 2013), and feeling disrespected at work (Derwing, 2003). A sample affective item was "I have always felt a sense of belonging at my workplace in Québec." One behavioral item required reverse-scoring ("I often take on a leadership role at work") so that larger scores indicated greater avoidance behavior, and three affective items required reverse-scoring, such as "I feel respected at my job in Québec," so that larger scores indicated more negative affective outcomes.

Participants also filled out a background questionnaire (see Appendix L) that elicited details regarding their gender, L1, birthplace, education background, length of residence in Québec, self-perceived proficiency in French, length of French study, and extent of French use. They were also asked to provide information on the amount and type of their work experience in French in Québec. A final open-ended question captured their meta-stereotypes by asking if they were aware of any stereotypes L1 Québec French speakers have toward L2 French speakers in Québec, and if so, to describe them.

Procedure

The survey data collection was administered online using LimeSurvey (https://www.limesurvey.org). Conducting the survey online, as opposed to in person, was essential to reaching employees in different cities across the province to get a more representative sample of Québec workplace experiences. In case of any concerns or confusion with the questionnaire items, participants could leave a comment or question in the comment box that was provided for each questionnaire and at the end of the survey. However, no questions or problems were raised concerning any technical or clarity issues. Any comment left at the end of

the survey only expressed gratitude and interest in the study, such as "Thank you so much, great survey! I am very interested in seeing any results from this research" or "The questions asked in this survey helped me reflect on my time here and my professional development, which made it easy to answer them logically." In addition, the timings for survey completion were verified to ensure that the survey was not completed in an unrealistic amount of time by clicking random ratings without reading the statements. No participant finished in under 10 minutes and the average completion time was 20 minutes. After agreeing to the terms outlined in the consent form (2 minutes), participants completed the battery of five questionnaires, beginning with the employment experiences questionnaire, which did not mention accent or discrimination, followed by the stigma consciousness, expectation of devaluation, perceived accent discrimination, and background questionnaires. For each questionnaire, participants were given the option to provide explanations or anecdotes to support their responses.

Data Analysis

The meta-stereotypes provided in response to the background questionnaire's open-ended question about L1 Québec French speakers' stereotypes targeting L2 French speakers were categorized thematically using a bottom-up approach. Stereotype categories were generated by deriving common themes from the questionnaire responses through a comparative analysis across participants' responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All adjectives that were comparable in meaning were agglomerated under a single category that best captured the essence of those stereotypes. For example, not smart, uneducated, and less intelligent, were combined under the "unintelligent" stereotype, whereas the stereotype category "incompetent" included descriptors about L2 French speakers' professional capabilities, such as not qualified, incompetent at their job, not as good at their jobs, or unprofessional. The stereotypes snobby and rude were combined

into one category as they both are characteristics associated with unpleasant behavior (final categories representing conceptually distinct themes are presented in Table 2). A second trained coder coded all the responses using the established coding scheme, which revealed κ coefficients between .91 and 1.00, indicating substantial interrater reliability (Landis & Koch, 1977). The scalar ratings (out of 100) from the employment experiences questionnaire, stigma consciousness questionnaire, expectation of devaluation questionnaire, and perceived accent discrimination questionnaire were exported from LimeSurvey into a spreadsheet. For the stigma consciousness questionnaire, because the internal consistency values (Cronbach's alpha) were sufficiently high ($\alpha = .83$), the ratings were averaged to create a mean stigma consciousness score per participant, where higher scores indicated stronger awareness of L2 French speakers' speech being stigmatized by L1 Québec French speakers. Similarly, for the expectation of devaluation questionnaire, the ratings were averaged because the internal consistency value was sufficient ($\alpha = .92$), and higher scores indicated a stronger expectation of being discriminated against by employers, colleagues, or customers based on participants' L2 French accent. The ratings on the perceived accent discrimination questionnaire were also averaged, in light of sufficiently high internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$), with higher scores indicating more frequent experiences with accent discrimination in the workplace. The 10 items on the employment experiences questionnaire remained distinct measures, as composite scores could not be created due to low internal consistency for both affect ($\alpha = .63$) and behavior ($\alpha = .65$) and intercorrelations revealed only weak to medium associations (if any) between the variables (see Appendix M). Furthermore, keeping the 10 items separate allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the extent to which individual behaviors and affect are related to the perceived discrimination measures. Lastly, effect sizes for Pearson correlations were interpreted in light of field-specific

guidelines, where *r* values (.25, .40, and .60) correspond to small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

Regarding the 24 voluntary comments that participants left in the survey to substantiate their ratings, 3 participants left a comment on the stigma consciousness questionnaire, 9 participants provided a comment on the expectation of devaluation questionnaire, 3 participants wrote a comment on the perceived accent discrimination questionnaire, and 9 participants left a comment on the employment experiences questionnaire. The comments that were relevant to the themes discussed in the results and that depicted a situation a participant faced are presented as illustrative examples to provide a qualitative glimpse of their perspectives or experiences. While many of the comments thus depict perceived discrimination experiences, it should be noted that six participants shared positive experiences as well (see Appendix N for these comments).

Results

L2 French Meta-Stereotypes

The first research question investigated L2 French speakers' meta-stereotypes (i.e., their knowledge of L1 French speakers' stereotypical views about L2 French speakers). While 15 participants mentioned not being aware of any stereotypes, the remaining 45 participants' responses revealed eight meta-stereotypes, which were derived from the bottom-up coding explained previously. Table 2 displays these meta-stereotypes, with the distribution of responses (i.e., number of participants who mentioned each stereotype in their comments), along with illustrative examples.

Table 2

L2 French Employees' Meta-Stereotypes in Québec

Stereotype	Distribution	Examples
Unwilling to learn French	9	P39: That they are lazy and not trying to learn French.
		P52: Unwilling to assimilate to Quebec culture and not making an effort to learn French.
Incompetent	8	P50: Nonnative speakers are not as good at their jobs.
		P5: They are deemed incompetent in a sense.
Threat to French language in Québec	7	P48: They think we are anti-Quebec/French. That we are tainting the linguistic-cultural map.
		P11: That nonnative speakers of French are trying to dilute the French language in Quebec.
Accented	6	P16: I know that they would expect a nonnative French speaker to have a thick English accent.
		P12: I guess the accent is the main stereotype. My friends often remind me that I have a strong accent.
Foreigners (not from Québec)	5	P24: They are immigrants and don't belong in Québec.
		P43: We are not from Quebec just because our first language is English.
Threat to jobs	5	P11: That nonnative speakers of French are taking jobs from native speakers.
		P32: That all employers want to hire us.

Snobby/rude	5	P31: That nonnative speakers of French think they're better. P50: That nonnative speakers are rude towards native speakers.
Unintelligent	5	P54: I think we are viewed as less intelligent. P9: That we're not smart enough.

Note. Distribution indicates the number of participants who mentioned each stereotype. 15 participants said they were not aware of any stereotypes of L2 French speakers.

As shown in Table 2, although the most common meta-stereotype mentioned was being perceived as unwilling to learn French (stated by nine participants), the remaining meta-stereotypes did not fall far behind, being mentioned by 5–8 different participants. The categories that emerged revealed various dimensions of stereotypes, targeting markers of "otherness" (e.g., accent strength, foreigner label), personal characteristics (e.g., snobby, rude, unintelligent, uneducated) as well as professional characteristics (e.g., being incompetent at their job or seen as unprofessional), a resistance to adopt the Québec language and culture (e.g., unwilling to learn French), and various types of threats (e.g., threat to jobs, threat to survival of French in Québec).

Participants' comments throughout the survey further illustrated these dimensions, demonstrating how they believe their accent is stereotyped in Québec. To start, being labeled as a foreigner was one stereotype that participants claimed to face, which appeared to be due to their accent in French marking their otherness. One participant mentioned, "I also have a French from France accent in addition to my English accent. I will never not be foreigner in Québec" (Québec City telecommunications HR). Even L2 French speakers born and raised in Québec appeared to not be immune to this label. An L1 English speaker from Montréal stated, "They

always assume anyone without a Québécois French accent is not from Québec. I often get asked if I am from Ontario or America" (Montréal occupational therapist).

Accent also appeared to feed into the meta-stereotypes reflecting personal and professional characteristics, where participants claimed their accent is the reason L1 speakers stereotype them as less smart or less competent at their jobs. For example, one participant alluded to this, stating that "[t]he accent in French seems to be interpreted as an intellectual disability. It was an eye-opening experience to know what someone with a disability must feel throughout their entire life" (Québec City quarry health and safety representative). As an L2 French Montréaler explained, L2 speakers are likely attributed inferior personal and professional qualities in Québec, not only because they are viewed as outsiders, but because they do not share the same language and culture: "For some people, if you aren't part of their culture they will see you as different and lesser than" (Montréal French immersion teacher). However, another participant explained that this stereotype of being less intelligent or less competent at work may be generation-specific: "I believe, based on my experience, that the older generation (60+ years) really see nonnative French speakers as NOT their equal, especially ones with a horrible accent, like me" (Montréal shoe store manager).

Another reason that the L2 French accent might be perceived as a signal of a lack of intelligence or work qualifications in Québec could be because some people might view it as a sign that the L2 speakers are not putting effort into acquiring the language. While the most common meta-stereotype was that L2 speakers are unwilling to learn French, one participant argued that this is not the case in reality and expressed frustration in being treated as if it were true:

> Even when I am speaking perfect French at work, I have been made fun of, had comments made at me or spoken down to by French-Canadian customers (many times comments about my accent, pronunciation, or which words I choose to use). It is discouraging because the message of the government is to encourage assimilation through language and I have done that to the best of my ability, yet I am looked down on by the public because of my accent or because of my origin. (Montréal cannabis sales advisor)

Although often stereotyped as having inferior qualities, other meta-stereotypes were related to L2 French speakers, particularly anglophones, being perceived as "better-than" and more likely to get better jobs (thus a threat in the job market). However, it is possible this is a more outdated perception, as one participant suggested:

> When I started here 30 years ago, there was an aura of being from an English-speaking province that meant I was likely better than the equivalent Québécois. A number of clients mentioned this to me in the early 90s, so it ended up being reverse discrimination. I haven't heard this from anyone in the last 20 years though. (Québec City physiotherapist)

This idea of being perceived as a threat in Québec was also apparent in the form of tainting the linguistic and cultural makeup of the province. Even a Montréal-born participant recounted a time when she was perceived as a threat: "At 18, I worked as a cashier at a grocery store and a customer told me and the customer I was talking to, to leave Québec and go back to Ontario where we belong as people like us ruin Québec" (Montréal occupational therapist). Some participants believed this stereotype of being a threat to the survival of the French language in Québec is likely to blame for their experiences with accent discrimination: "They see my English

accent when speaking French as a threat to the preservation of their language and thus they discriminate against me and others like me" (Montréal lab technician). This fear seemed to be particularly apparent for L1 English speakers: "I feel that the negative situations, experiences that I have had were based on a fear of an outsider (me) taking over and forcing English on everyone" (Québec City quarry health and safety representative).

As best described by these previous two participants, these stereotypes or misconceptions about L2 speakers could fuel biased attitudes toward L2 speakers, leading to discriminatory or negative situations. Therefore, it is important to next understand the extent to which L2 French speakers feel they are impacted by others at work who may view them through this stereotypical lens and thus treat them differently.

Perceived Accent Discrimination at Work and Possible Outcomes

While the goal of the first research question was to understand how L2 French speakers believe others view them and their speech, the second research question works toward understanding whether this awareness of and experience with stereotypes might be associated with how L2 French speakers behave and feel in workplace contexts. Table 3 summarizes the quantitative questionnaire data, where the descriptive statistics for stigma consciousness show that participants were moderately aware of how L2 French accents are stigmatized in Québec and somewhat frequently think about how their speech is viewed by L1 French speakers. In terms of how this awareness translates into expectations of bias in workplace contexts, participants' average expectation of devaluation score was mid-range (on a 100-point scale), meaning that they only somewhat expected to be treated differently and unfairly at work in comparison to L1 French speakers. More specifically, situations that received the highest average scores included bias from employers at the resume screening stage, where they expected employers to pass over

a resume from an L2 French speaker in favor of an L1 speaker (M = 61.97, SD = 26.14); bias from customers, where they expected to receive more complaints than an L1 French speaker (M = 58.40, SD = 30.67); and bias from other employees, where they expected to be respected less than their L1 French colleagues (M = 56.62, SD = 28.39). Furthermore, participants reported only occasionally perceiving to experience accent discrimination at their current workplace on average, however, the range is notably quite large, indicating some have never experienced discrimination, while others reported frequent experiences. The most common perceived discrimination experience involved people making jokes or negative comments about their accent when they speak French at work (M = 54.72, SD = 33.33). Lastly, regarding their experiences at work, the most frequent avoidance behavior was avoiding customer-facing jobs, while the most frequent affective outcome was being concerned about their professional advancement opportunities.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Questionnaire Measures

Questionnaire Measure	*M*	*SD*	Range
Stigma consciousness	59.76	16.91	28–92
Expectation of devaluation	42.68	17.67	15–80
Perceived accent discrimination	37.09	21.44	0–79
Employment experience items			
Avoid leadership roles at work	40.57	30.74	0–100
Avoid voicing opinions at meetings	36.43	26.53	0–100
Avoid interacting with colleagues	44.78	30.41	0–100
Would like to quit job	30.50	29.40	0–100
Avoid customer-facing jobs	49.96	37.59	0–100
Diminished sense of belonging at work	42.00	27.23	0–100
Stressed at work	50.08	25.94	0–100
Lack of confidence with skills at job	28.13	20.87	0–82
Feel disrespected at work	21.40	21.41	0–99
Concerned about promotion	55.73	32.07	0–100

Note. 100-point agree–disagree scale (100 = “strongly agree”).

Regarding the relationships between these questionnaire measures, Table 4 shows that all three constructs were strongly related to each other, where the strongest association was between the expectation of devaluation and the perceived accent discrimination scores. On the one hand, an individual who reports the experience of accent discrimination at work would be more likely to also expect such discrimination in other hypothetical workplace contexts. On the other hand,

however, it is not necessarily the case that people should expect discrimination because they have experienced it themselves, meaning that their expectations could be based on meta-stereotypes or on the experiences of others. A similar argument could be made for the relationship between perceived discrimination and stigma consciousness: Perceived experiences of discrimination are likely to make one conscious of the stigma surrounding their accent, but individuals could be high in stigma consciousness due to meta-stereotypes or linguistic insecurity, without actually experiencing discrimination themselves. Likewise, those who have greater expectations of being devalued in workplace scenarios are likely those who are more worried about their accent and how it is perceived; however, having greater stigma consciousness does not necessarily mean that they will have higher expectations of being devalued specifically in the workplace. Therefore, in light of this nuanced conceptual difference and a substantial but not absolute overlap between these three measures, they remained distinct constructs in the following analysis.

Table 4

Intercorrelations Between Stigma Consciousness, Expectation of Devaluation, and Perceived Accent Discrimination at Work

	1	2	3
1 Stigma consciousness	—		
2 Expectation of devaluation	.65	—	
3 Perceived discrimination	.65	.79	—

To examine how participants' stigma consciousness, expectation of devaluation, and perceived discrimination scores are related to their behavior and affect in the workplace, the

scores from the three questionnaires were correlated with participants' ratings for each behavioral and affective statement from the employment experiences questionnaire (e.g., avoid interaction, avoid certain jobs, feel stressed). As displayed in Table 5, Pearson correlations (two-tailed) revealed several relationships, many of which surpassed the benchmark for a medium association ($r > .40$), according to field-specific guidelines (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). Regarding stigma consciousness, being more conscious of their stigmatized accent was most strongly related to avoiding high-communication oriented jobs and having a weaker sense of belonging in the workplace, with medium effect sizes. Expecting bias and devaluation in workplace situations was most strongly associated with avoiding high-communication oriented jobs and leadership roles, feeling less competent with job skills, and feeling less respected at work, with medium to large effect sizes. More frequently experiencing accent discrimination in the workplace was most strongly related to avoiding leadership roles, high-communication oriented jobs, and voicing ideas at meetings, and feeling less respected at work, with medium effect sizes (see Appendix O for example scatterplots). For behavioral items, it was perceived accent discrimination that showed stronger and more numerous relationships, whereas for the affective items, both perceived discrimination and expectation of devaluation showed a similar number of relationships of similar strength.

Table 5

Correlations of Target Perceived Discrimination Measures with Workplace Behaviors and Affect

Workplace behavior/affect	Stigma consciousness	Expectation of devaluation	Perceived accent discrimination
Behavioral items			
Avoid leadership roles at work	**.35**	**.44**	**.57**
Avoid voicing opinions at meetings	**.34**	**.38**	**.42**
Avoid interacting with colleagues	.19	**.28**	**.38**
Would like to quit job	.22	.21	**.35**
Avoid customer-facing jobs	**.43**	**.61**	**.57**
Affective items			
Diminished sense of belonging at work	**.48**	**.32**	**.31**
Stressed at work	.15	.15	.18
Lack of confidence with skills at job	.23	**.40**	**.35**
Feel disrespected at work	**.36**	**.41**	**.54**
Concerned about promotion	**.28**	**.39**	**.32**

Note. Associations that exceed the benchmark for a small effect size ($r > |.25|$) are bolded.

Participants' comments about the target measures helped to exemplify some of these findings, especially with respect to any behavioral or affective outcomes that could be inferred from their statements. In terms of stigma consciousness, some participants mentioned being self-conscious of their accent and concerned with the judgments it may elicit, for example, stating "I am always worried and thinking about my accent" (Montréal bartender), and "I worry that others may think less of me because of [my accent]" (Saint-Lazare park warden). In terms of affective

correlates of stigma consciousness, participants mentioned experiencing negative emotions, such as “It doesn’t always feel good to be an anglophone in Québec” (Québec City data analyst).

Regarding expectations of devaluation, one participant’s anecdote highlighted how they expect L2 speakers to be treated differently than L1 French speakers in terms of job acceptance and pay: “I believe accent plays an important role in job acceptance, especially in Québec City. In certain companies I have worked at in Québec City, I have had English-speaking colleagues paid less than French native speakers for the same position” (Québec City retail store manager). The affective outcome of this appeared to be concern for her professional advancement opportunities, as she continued: “Being promoted is a concern for me as I recognize that opportunities could be given to a native speaker who perhaps will integrate faster with the company.” Another participant shared a similar concern due to her friend’s experience, suggesting that in addition to language, this devaluation and barrier to promotions could be due to identity concerns as well: “I have a friend who works as an actuary who was told by her employer she would never make it higher in management or partner as her last name is not Québécois” (Montréal occupational therapist).

Finally, in terms of affective outcomes of perceived accent discrimination experiences at work, one participant explained that they do not feel respected by their colleagues: “I always have a nagging feeling that the staff don’t respect me as much as the other manager who is French” (Québec City retail store manager). Another participant recounted a time she faced disrespect during a job interview: “The interviewers made fun of me for not understanding a word and told me my French wasn’t strong enough for the position even after completing a 2-month internship there prior” (Montréal occupational therapist). Now, at her current job, she explains how colleagues constantly comment on her accent: “I would say that about 70% of the

time I speak to native French, they tell me my accent is cute, but I generally can't have a conversation without a comment towards my accent." She continued to explain the impact of these coworker behaviors, stating that "I don't really want to hear the comments so I just eat my lunches alone and do my own things, because I don't want to feel like I'm not similar to them."

Discussion

The goal of this study was to first establish how L2 French employees in Québec believe they are viewed by L1 French speakers because of their speech and then to investigate whether their awareness surrounding these stereotypes about their accent or their perceived experiences with accent discrimination are associated with their workplace behaviors and affect. L2 French employees representing a wide range of occupations in Québec most frequently reported being stereotyped as unwilling to learn French, incompetent, while also being a threat to the survival of French in the province. Having greater stigma consciousness (i.e., being more aware and preoccupied with these aforementioned stereotypes) was associated with increased avoidance behaviors (e.g., avoiding leadership roles) and increased negative affect at work (e.g., lacking a sense of belonging). Participants had also speculated that these stereotypes are likely why they face accent discrimination in Québec, despite their efforts to improve their French, which is why it was also essential to explore how they are treated by those who may view them through that stereotypical lens. Most notably, perceived accent discrimination at work was the variable most strongly related to avoidance behaviors and feeling disrespected at work.

Meta-Stereotypes of L2 French Speakers in Québec

The first research question asked about L2 French employees' meta-stereotypes regarding their accent and status as an L2 French speaker in Québec. Participants most frequently reported believing that L1 French speakers in Québec stereotype them as being unwilling to improve their

French. Other meta-stereotypes ranged from being considered unintelligent or incompetent, with one participant comparing it to living with a disability, to being perceived as a danger to the survival of French in Québec, accented, foreigners, a threat to L1 speakers' jobs, and rude. Looking at these meta-stereotypes more broadly, they appeared to target various aspects of a person's identity, from statements of otherness, to personality and professional traits, to rejection of Québec's language and a threat to its culture and job market.

To begin, the concept of otherness emerged from L2 speakers being stereotyped as foreigners and as accented, considering accent is a robust cue to a speaker's ethnic or social identity (Giles & Johnson, 1987), and thus a marker implying their lack of belonging. This is in line with meta-stereotypes present in other francophone contexts, such as in Belgium, where Belgians (considered nonstandard French speakers) believed that French speakers from France hold negative perceptions of their accented speech (Yzerbyt et al., 2005), or in Canada, where anglophone L2 French speakers perceived that L1 French Canadians label them as foreigners (Freynet et al., 2018). The stereotype of being viewed as a foreigner was not only expressed by immigrants, but even by individuals born in Québec or who spoke fluent French with an accent from France, illustrating how this meta-stereotype might reflect the pervasive traditional mentality that a Québécois identity is conditional upon knowing the Québec variety of French (Bourhis, 2001). Some participants believed that they would forever be labeled a foreigner, explaining that despite their efforts to learn French or despite their success in acquiring the language, their accent would prevent them from being able to fully assimilate into Québec society. These meta-stereotypes clearly demonstrate how L2 employees feel "other-ed" in the province because of their accent, which could eventually lead to experiencing a sense of non-belonging, low self-esteem, or depression (e.g., Dovchin, 2020).

Other meta-stereotypes captured various personal characteristics, described through such labels as unintelligent, uneducated, rude, and superior, as well as professional characteristics, such as being incompetent, unprofessional, or unqualified to work in Québec. L2 French employees likely believe they are stereotyped in this way due to their accent which others tend to use to interpret an individual's characteristics, such as when stronger accents are associated with low intelligence, incompetence, or lack of communication skills (e.g., Dragojevic et al., 2019; Fuertes et al., 2012; Matsuda, 1991) – an association which can be attributed to underlying affective reactions to speech that is difficult to process (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Likewise, bias toward a certain accent can often lead to negative predispositions about someone's personality or competence if they speak with that accent (Wang et al., 2013).

One meta-stereotype that is perhaps more unique to the Québec context was L2 speakers' unwillingness to improve their French. According to one participant, this meta-stereotype stemmed from comments made toward her accent or choice of expressions. Therefore, despite all participants being able to work in French and having studied the language for 16 years on average, they believe that their less-than-perfect speech—as perceived by their judgmental interlocutors—is misconceived as their unwillingness to perfect their French. This meta-stereotype reflects the belief in accent controllability, where listeners who hold the unfounded belief that accents are controllable may interpret a speaker's accent as their unwillingness or lack of motivation to change their speech, which then reflects on that speaker's competence (Dragojevic et al., 2019). This meta-stereotype demonstrates how participants may feel they are working in an environment that perpetuates unrealistic expectations for their mastery of French.

Finally, L2 French employees also believed that they are perceived as a threat, which can be categorized into two types based on Stephan and Stephan's (2000) integrated threat theory of

prejudice, which provides a framework for potential predictors of prejudice. First, being a threat to Québec's language and culture, or as one participant mentioned, being labeled as "anti-Québec," would be considered a symbolic threat, which can be defined as a threat to a group's values and culture (Stephan et al., 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). The perception that L2 employees represent this symbolic threat possibly stems from local L1 speakers' history of linguistic insecurity and concerns with immigrants and anglophones diluting their culture and language (Bourhis, 2001; Rocher, 1992). Second, being perceived as a threat to L1 speakers' jobs would be considered a realistic threat, which is related to the economic well-being of a group (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). According to one participant, being more desirable for jobs seemed to be more prevalent 30 years ago, so it is possible that this stereotype stems from the generation that lived in Québec prior to the Quiet Revolution when anglophones were considered the economic elite, holding more well-paid jobs than francophones (Bernard, 2008; Dickinson & Young, 2003). If L2 employees are perceived as these two types of threats, whether these threats are assumed or real, it can lead to negative attitudes and prejudice toward L2 employees, who are seen as outgroup members (Stephan & Stephan 1996, 2000; Stephan et al., 1999).

It is important to understand how L2 speakers believe they are stereotyped, as biased and discriminatory behavior is often based on stereotypes, misconceptions, or generalizations about certain social groups (Derous & Ryan, 2019; Stephan & Stephan 1996), and as participants in this study explained, these stereotypes are likely the reason for their negative encounters with L1 speakers. As one participant noted: "I've noticed in Québec that some people have said in my hearing 'all anglophones...,' generally with a negative connotation. Generalizing seems lazy to me and could so easily lead to prejudice." Whether in reality these stereotypes exist or not among L1 Québec French speakers remains irrelevant because it is L2 speakers' meta-perceptions alone

that have consequences for their personal and professional well-being within the French-majority workforce, which will be discussed in the following section.

Outcomes of Expecting and Experiencing Accent Discrimination in Québec

Although L2 French speakers in Québec encounter various common stereotypes targeting their accent, the potential consequences of these meta-perceptions remain less clear, particularly in the workplace. Therefore, the second research question explored the potential affective and behavioral outcomes of three separate measures that captured various ways in which stereotypes might impact L2 employees in Québec (stigma consciousness, expectation of devaluation, perceived accent discrimination). These three distinct measures also help to establish how L2 French employees in Québec compare to other stigmatized L2 populations in their expectations of and experience with accent bias, which contributes to existing research on how L2 speakers experience stigmatization (Derwing, 2003; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b).

Stigma Consciousness

Regarding Pinel's (1999) stigma consciousness measure that was adapted for accent, the L2 French employees' average score here (60 on a 100-point scale) was comparable to the average of Gluszek and Dovidio's (2010b) participants from the United States who spoke English with an L2 or regional accent (M = 3.99 on a 7-point scale, corresponding to 57 on a 100-point scale). Thus, regardless of language background, context, or target language, accented speakers appear to be moderately concerned with how their speech is viewed by their interlocutor, particularly L1 speakers. In addition, while research on stigmas in the workplace tends to focus on gender, race, or disability (Carr & Namkung, 2021; Ensher et al., 2001), these findings highlight the importance of giving more attention to accent stigmatization, especially as the values reported here for accent appear to be greater than those reported previously for gender

(32 in Pinel & Paulin, 2005), race (47 in Pinel et al., 2005), or learning disability (58 in Daley & Rappolt-Schlichtmann, 2018). As indicated through participants' comments, their high stigma consciousness stems from their frequent concerns about their L2 accent, fueled by L1 speakers' persistent comments about it, which makes L2 speakers even more self-conscious of their L2 status. Again, as explained by participants, these concerns made them reticent to speak, caused negative feelings, or instilled a fear of being devalued, with potential repercussions in the workplace.

Indeed, as shown through correlational analyses, stigma consciousness was related to several affective and behavioral outcomes, where the strongest relationship was with having a weaker sense of belonging in the workplace. This result is similar to Gluszek and Dovidio's (2010b) observation that those L2 speakers who felt more conscious of their stigmatized accent reported a weaker sense of belonging in the United States. Another potential affective outcome, with a weak association with stigma consciousness, was feelings of disrespect, which might reflect high stigma conscious individuals heightened sensitivity to displays of disrespect (Pinel, 2004). In fact, Pinel and Paulin (2005) showed a comparable finding for gender, where the employees who demonstrated greater awareness of their stereotyped status as women felt more disrespected at work. Furthermore, high stigma conscious employees were also more concerned about promotion opportunities, a concern previously reported by L2 English employees (Neeley, 2013). Participants worried that their accent, or even name, would always signal their "non-Québécois" identity, which some believed would be a barrier to advancing within their company.

Regarding associations with workplace behaviors, stigma consciousness was most strongly related with avoiding customer-facing jobs, and had weak associations with avoiding leadership roles and avoiding speaking at meetings. Consistent with prior research which

suggests that high stigma conscious individuals tend to avoid situations where they might be stereotyped (Pinel, 1999) and display greater disengagement (Pinel et al., 2005), the L2 French speakers in this study were concerned about how their accent is perceived in Québec, which may have led them to unnecessarily restrict their job options, disengage and resist sharing their ideas at meetings, or hold back from expressing their leadership qualities. It goes without saying that these potential outcomes could deprive companies of qualified employees who stand to offer diverse professional skillsets and perspectives. Although Pinel and Paulin (2005) found that stigma consciousness was related to employees' intent to quit their job in the service industry, this was not the case here, possibly because the current study's participants represented a wider range of jobs, beyond the service industry, which varied in status and levels of customer contact.

Expectation of Devaluation Due to Accent

The average expectation of devaluation score reported here (43 on a 100-point scale) is slightly higher than the average reported by the 16 L2 French participants in Freynet et al. (2018) who were born in Canada outside of Québec (M = 2.59 on a 7-point scale, corresponding to 37 on a 100-point scale), suggesting that L2 French speakers might expect to be devalued slightly more in Québec, particularly in workplace environments, compared to other Canadian provinces, but this would need to be confirmed in a future cross-provincial study. The situation eliciting the highest score was L2 speakers' expectation to be undervalued at the resume-screening stage, which is indeed a justifiable concern given the findings of Study 1 and those reported by Lindberg and Trofimovich's (2023), where L1 Québec French raters considered resumes of L1 French speakers more employable than those of L2 French speakers. It is therefore not surprising that expectation of devaluation was found to be most strongly related to the behavioral consequence of L2-speaking employees avoiding customer-facing jobs. As stigmatized

individuals tend to anxiously expect rejection based on their status (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002), L2 French speakers may find applying to such jobs in Québec a waste of time if they expect their resume to be rejected. Alternatively, because expectation of unfair treatment has been shown to be related to less enjoyment from intergroup interaction (Vorauer et al., 1998), L2 speakers with these expectations might avoid jobs that require high contact with local customers and might ultimately (as shown here) avoid communicating with certain colleagues, particularly if those colleagues are L1 Québec French speakers. Consequently, by intentionally limiting encounters or avoiding tasks that require high contact with colleagues, L2 employees might experience impaired work dynamics and reduced job satisfaction, which can prevent the development of professional networks critical for career success (Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Other behavioral outcomes involving expectation of devaluation included avoidance of leadership roles and reduced participation in meetings, with small to medium associations. These findings are supported by stereotype threat research (Roberson & Kulik, 2007), which explains that if employees interpret a situation as a threat of being stereotyped based on their accent, they react by disengaging from their job due to their fear of being judged negatively. Exhibiting such avoidance strategies at work would likely lead L2 employees to meet only the minimum requirements, which could negatively impact performance evaluations or potential career promotions (Russo et al., 2017).

Turning to affective outcomes, there were small-to-medium associations between expecting to be devalued and feeling incompetent and disrespected at work, lacking a sense of belonging, and worrying about promotion opportunities. These findings illustrate work-related psychological outcomes relevant to L2 employees, suggesting that stereotype-threatening situations have negative consequences for individuals' wellbeing (Spencer et al., 2016). While

anticipating stigmatization can have negative implications for one's self-esteem (Vorauer et al., 1998), this study's findings suggest that in the workplace, this translates to lacking confidence in one's professional performance, which could have a negative impact on employees' improvement, initiative and creativity, and motivation to engage in their work (Pierce & Gardner, 2004).

Perceived Accent Discrimination at Work

Regarding perceived accent discrimination, the average score reported here (37 on a 100-point scale) is comparable to the average reported by Wated and Sanchez's (2006) L2 English (L1 Spanish) employees working in Florida (M = 2.68 on a 7-point scale, which corresponds to 38 on a 100-point scale), suggesting that the two populations experience similar levels of perceived accent discrimination in the workplace. Compared to previous studies which used the same questionnaire to measure perceived work discrimination based on ethnicity, the averages converted to a 100-point scale are also comparable (38 in Sanchez & Brock, 1996; 39 in DelCampo et al., 2010), further demonstrating that perceived accent discrimination is a pertinent issue to be addressed among other forms of discrimination, particularly because language discrimination is a stronger predictor of negative wellbeing outcomes than racial discrimination (Wei et al., 2012; Yoo et al., 2009). Participants' comments illustrated that discrimination can be experienced in various ways, for example, through intuition (e.g., having a "nagging feeling" that they are disrespected), concrete actions (e.g., being paid less than L1 speakers), or explicit comments from others (e.g., being told they do not belong in Québec). Nevertheless, regardless of how L2 employees interpret discriminatory behaviors, these behaviors clearly take place in their workplace experience.

Behavioral outcomes had the strongest associations with perceived workplace discrimination, where those who perceived greater levels of accent discrimination at work were more likely to exhibit avoidance behaviors and have greater intention to quit their job. Considering Freynet et al.'s (2018) findings, where L2 French speakers' most common behavioral response to perceived discrimination was to avoid threatening situations, including interaction with L1 speakers, this study's findings demonstrate that L2 speakers appear to also carry over these behaviors to workplace contexts. Similarly to expecting devaluation, perceived discrimination experiences are also related to employee disengagement (Jones et al., 2009), which was shown through associations with withdrawal behaviors, such as avoiding colleagues, leadership roles, and speaking at meetings. Given that employees' intent to quit their jobs has been shown to be related to perceived discrimination based on race, gender, and age (Foley et al., 2005; Volpone & Avery, 2013), the present findings similarly indicate that perceived accent discrimination is also associated with employees' desire to leave their job, highlighting a potential additional explanation for employee turnover that should not be overlooked.

In terms of affective outcomes, perceived accent discrimination was associated with four of the five psychological consequences; only feeling stressed at work was unrelated to perceived discrimination, contrary to findings from Wated and Sanchez (2006) who found discrimination to be one of the greatest sources of work stress for stigmatized employees. Nevertheless, it remains clear that perceived discrimination affects L2 employees' job satisfaction and wellbeing. Just as experience with bias fosters feelings of exclusion and increased anxiety for immigrants (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b; Wei et al., 2012), perceived accent discrimination translates for L2 employees into a lack of belonging and respect in the workplace and into a loss of confidence in their skills and doubts about their upward mobility. It is a fundamental human need to belong,

such as having positive social attachments among coworkers; without such feelings of acceptance and inclusion, employees might experience negative affect (e.g., anxiety, loneliness) and might struggle to adapt to their work environment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Limitations and Future Research

While this study highlights the importance for future research to address accent discrimination from the perspective of stigmatized individuals, there are several limitations that should be considered. First, because the meta-stereotype survey question was open-ended and exploratory in nature, it highlighted reoccurring meta-stereotypes in the participant sample, but may not have captured the true extent to which they exist among L2 French speakers in Québec. Future research could conduct a larger-scale survey focusing on these target meta-stereotypes to see how common they are among L2 French speakers in Québec and across Canada. Second, even though participants were generous in sharing their experiences through unsolicited comments in the survey, a more in-depth qualitative study involving interviews with select individuals would be insightful for developing a deeper understanding of their perceptions of accent discrimination, with questions related to how they became aware of such stereotypes, and eliciting detailed recounts of their experiences. Third, even though participants represented a wide range of language backgrounds, ethnicities, and ages, as well as various job types, the current study did not consider how L2 employees' perceived accent discrimination might vary according to such individual differences or between various types of jobs. In addition, while the survey results represented eight different cities in Québec, most participants worked in Montréal. Therefore, future studies could explore how L2 French employees' stigma consciousness and perceived accent discrimination experiences might differ between different L1s, ages, ethnicities, genders, lengths of residence, job types (e.g., high vs. low status jobs; high vs. low customer

contact), or between different regions (e.g., Montréal vs. Québec City; Québec vs. New Brunswick). Lastly, another limitation is the associational nature of the data, where it is not only impossible to infer causality, but there are also potentially reciprocal relationships that would be difficult to disentangle. For example, perceiving more discrimination at work was related to having less confidence in job skills, but it could also be that employees who are already insecure about their job skills might be more sensitive to potential discriminatory behaviors.

Practical Implications

Drawing from this study's findings, there are several practical implications for both L2 employees and their employers and colleagues that may help improve intercultural communication and the wellbeing of accented employees. First, it is important that L2 employees be aware of the effects stigma consciousness could have on their work life and that they consciously resist internalizing inaccurate stereotypes, such as their accent being a sign of incompetence, so that self-fulfilling prophecies can be avoided (Russo et al., 2017). Second, acknowledging challenges faced by high stigma-conscious individuals, L2 employees who might hesitate to initiate a discussion at meetings for fear of being judged by their accent or language mistakes should be encouraged to send their ideas to colleagues in written form prior to meetings to ensure their ideas are heard and discussed. Third, before concluding that an L2 French employee is "incompetent" (which appears to be a common meta-stereotype in Québec), employers should consider that employees' behaviors could be a coping strategy. For instance, if an employee hesitates to take lead or remains quiet during meetings and distant from others in the office, it is not necessarily a reflection of their professional ability or motivation, but could rather be a result of an ethnocentric workplace culture. Therefore, L1 managers and colleagues should be aware of how their own behaviors and expectations can impact L2 employees'

successful integration and growth within the organization. With this awareness, L1-speaking managers and colleagues could work on correcting behaviors that tend to trigger L2 employees' harmful meta-perceptions. For example, they could avoid making comments about L2 employees' accent (whether positive or negative), and make efforts to include them in informal conversations. In Québec, research initiatives have already proposed interventions for pre-service teachers that promote the successful integration of allophone students (Querrien, 2017), but a similar approach could be taken with employers to support allophone workers' (or more generally, L2 speakers') workplace integration. For instance, promoting perspective-taking and empathy through open conversations about L2 employees' experiences might help raise L1 speakers' awareness of the challenges and emotions that L2 employees face and inspire them to be more accommodating (Neeley et al., 2012). Taking L2 employees' reality into account by acknowledging stereotypes can help organizations develop alternative benchmarks for performance success, increase trust, and improve workplace communication, ultimately leading to improved job performance (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Therefore, rather than implementing diversity training sessions that unrealistically aim to diminish stereotypes, which are often too brief and ineffective (Sanchez & Medkik, 2004), such trainings could focus on giving employers the skills to have these (difficult but nonetheless useful) discussions with employees about the inevitable existence of stereotypes and their potential outcomes (Roberson & Kulik, 2007).

Conclusion

This study investigated L2 French employees' meta-stereotypes and workplace outcomes of perceived accent discrimination, which is an understudied type of discrimination often overshadowed by research on other workplace stigmas, such as those associated with race, gender, or disability (Ensher et al., 2001; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014). The

findings showed that L2 French employees who work in a French-majority workplace in Québec perceived to be viewed by L1 French speakers as unwilling to learn French and incompetent at their job, making them a threat to the Québec culture and language. For these employees, various affective and behavioral outcomes in the workplace were shown to be related to the extent to which those employees think about such stereotypes (stigma consciousness), expect to face bias in workplace situations because of their stigmatized accent (expectation of devaluation), and experience accent discrimination on the job (perceived accent discrimination). Although the L2 employees in this study reported lower levels of perceived discrimination at their workplace compared to their levels of stigma consciousness and expectations of devaluation, perceived discrimination was the variable that had the most and some of the strongest relationships with affective and behavioral outcomes, particularly feeling disrespected, exhibiting withdrawal behaviors (e.g., avoiding colleagues, leadership roles, and voicing ideas), and even considering to quit their job. Nevertheless, people do not necessarily need to have experienced discrimination for stigmatization to influence their work life—stigma consciousness and expectation alone are enough to play a role in their choice of job, their wellbeing at work (e.g., self-esteem, sense of belonging), and their willingness to share ideas or lead a project. These conclusions call for more research exploring accent discrimination from the perspective of the stigmatized individuals so as to better understand how they perceive and experience accent bias.

Chapter 4: General Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Studies

The overall goal of this dissertation was to explore how stereotypes and expectations of L2 French speakers in Québec, held by L1 Québec French speakers, impact L2 French speakers in workplace situations, such as during job interviews, work meetings, or customer interactions. Expectations and stereotypes, including their potential consequences, were explored through both listener and speaker perspectives. Various potential outcomes from accent bias were investigated, including hiring bias at both the resume and interview stages, and wellbeing and behavioral outcomes from encountering perceived discriminatory behaviors or disrespect at work.

Key Findings

Collectively, the two studies in this dissertation address the need for a comprehensive listener- and speaker-focused perspective on how L2 speakers are perceived and treated in the workplace, and contribute to our understanding of L1 listeners' accent bias and L2 speakers' perceived accent stigmatization. The first key finding was that L2 French job applicants (speakers of L1 Arabic and L1 Spanish) were found to be less employable for a waitress position than an L1 Québec French speaker, at both the resume and interview stages, as evaluated by L1 French listeners with HR experience (Study 1). Furthermore, L2 French employees appear to be aware of this hiring bias present in Québec, as their most commonly expressed expectation of devaluation was that L1 employers would pass over job applications from L2 speakers in favor of those from L1-speaking applicants (Study 2). This was complemented by anecdotal claims that accent does play a role in job acceptance, such as a participant's comment describing interviewers who mocked her French and stated that it was not good enough for the job.

The second, more positive key finding was that violating expectations of applicants' status as an L1 or L2 speaker in a positive way appeared to lead to the most favorable hiring decisions after an interview (Study 1). In other words, if a job applicant is expected to speak L2 French, inferred from information outlined on their resume, but their speech turns out to sound like an L1 speaker during the interview, they will have the greatest chance of being hired due to positively surprising the L1 French interviewers. To contextualize this finding, for example, an anecdote shared by an L2 employee (a speaker of L1 Indonesian) from Study 2 illustrates the reactions from her interlocutors, where this speaker's proficient French positively mismatched the expectation that they must have created on the basis of her Asian appearance:

> I think it's not so much my accent, but my face. People don't think that a person with my face (I am Asian) can speak French (or English for that matter). Some people are quite surprised that I can speak French as fluently as I can.

Similarly, another visible minority L2 employee (a speaker of L1 Mandarin) from Study 2 commented that people are often positively surprised by her French: "Because I'm a visible minority, people don't expect my French to be that nice, which might help in some weird way. I met 2 or 3 people telling me that my French is better than they thought." Taken together, it appears that speaking Québec French when a speaker is expected to speak an L2 variety, based on their appearance from a resume photo or a first encounter, elicits positive reactions from L1-speaking listeners.

The third key finding was that when L2-speaking job applicants were less comprehensible and spoke a less standard French than expected by L1 listeners with HR experience during the resume screening stage, the applicants were more likely to be downgraded in their employability throughout the interview (Study 1). This finding likely reflects the

importance that L1-speaking listeners place on hiring someone with a prestigious and comprehensible accent for customer-contact positions. Even though L2 employees in Study 2 seemed to believe that L1 speakers expect them to have a strong accent, violations of accentedness expectations were only weakly related to employability evaluations in Study 1. L1 listeners' employability perceptions in Study 1 appeared to be associated more strongly with violations of expectations concerning the type of a speaker's accent (in terms of its departure from what listeners perceive as a standard variety) and their comprehensibility (in terms of the degree of effort required for listeners to understand the speaker, compared to an initial expectation) rather than with a speaker's expected accent strength.

The fourth key finding was that the majority of L2 employees surveyed in this dissertation were aware of various ways in which they are stereotyped in Québec, believing that L1 speakers expect them to have a certain personality (e.g., rude, snobby, unintelligent), to perform poorly at work, to speak poor-quality, accented French because they are unwilling to learn the language, to dominate the job market, and to contribute to the decline of French in the province due to their perceived unwillingness to speak French well (Study 2).

The final key finding was that L2 speakers' awareness of negative stereotypes had multiple potential consequences for them. The extent to which L2 speakers felt self-conscious about their L2 accent, expected to be devalued due to their accent, and experienced accent discrimination appeared to be related to various work outcomes pertaining to L2 speakers' job performance and personal wellbeing (Study 2). Most notably, experiencing perceived accent discrimination at work was most strongly related to possible negative consequences, including one's desire to quit their job, avoidance of leadership roles and workplace interactions, and various emotional outcomes, such as feeling disrespected at work. Nevertheless, even just being

aware of the stigma surrounding their accent, irrespective of having actual negative encounters with L1 speakers, was also related to potential negative outcomes for L2-speaking employees, such as lacking a sense of belonging at work and restricting their job options by avoiding customer-facing positions.

Overall Implications

Understanding Language Attitudes in Québec

While most research on accent bias toward employees has been conducted in the United States and with a focus on L2 English accents (Hideg et al., 2022), this dissertation contributes not only a Canadian perspective to this literature but also findings about an L2 accent other than English. This contribution is important because L2 employees might be perceived differently in different countries, and L2 speakers of languages that are not the global lingua franca might encounter different levels of perceived discrimination than L2 English speakers. For instance, in the United States, L2 English employees are frequently perceived as less employable than L1 speakers (Roessel et al., 2019) and experience perceived accent discrimination, leading to stress and intent to quit their job (Wated & Sanchez, 2006). However, different findings might be expected in Canada, where people generally view immigration favorably, express positive attitudes toward immigrants in the workforce (Gonzalez-Barrera & Connor, 2019), and generally accept newcomers (Lund & Hira-Friesen, 2014), creating and maintaining initiatives that welcome and support them (Guo & Guo, 2016; Scott, 2020).

With a focus on L2 French speakers in Québec, findings from this dissertation nevertheless reflected similar preferences for L1 speakers as has been found previously in other contexts. At both the resume and interview stages, L1 French speakers were viewed more positively as the ideal candidates for a waitress position in comparison to L2 speakers. Reports

on employment prospects of Québec's allophones like the ones in this dissertation (e.g., speakers of L1 Arabic and L1 Spanish) have also revealed that these minorities suffer from systemic discrimination, where for example, only 3.1% of the workforce in Québec municipalities is made up of people from ethnic minorities (CDPDJ, 2020). To take another example, identical CVs that were sent in response to job offers in Montréal were 60% more likely to receive an interview invitation if they featured a Québécois name than an Arabic or a Latin-American name (Eid, 2012). As all candidates were equally qualified for the advertised positions in both Eid's study (2012) and this dissertation, possible reasons behind this hiring preference only begin to emerge from the insights of L2 employees themselves. According to the L2 employees who participated in Study 2, L1 speakers view them as incompetent, unintelligent, rude, and too lazy to learn French. If these characteristics are indeed projected onto L2 speakers, it could explain why qualified L2 job applicants are downgraded from the start.

The general preference for hiring L1 job candidates could also stem from Québec francophones' linguistic insecurity, due to their status as a linguistic minority in North America and the proximity of anglophones and allophones whose presence exacerbates a fear of losing Québec's language and culture, prompting efforts to constantly reassert the status of French in Québec. As allophone immigrants typically speak more English than French in the public domain, their linguistic behavior could be interpreted as a threat to French in Québec (Dickinson & Young, 2003; Kircher, 2014), which may make them less desirable for communication-oriented and customer-facing positions. In fact, the L2 employees in this dissertation believed that locals consider them a threat to the French language in the province. If this is indeed one reason why L2-speaking employees avoid applying to positions that require customer contact, there is a concerning implication for the diversity and inclusivity of Québec-based businesses.

With L2 French speakers considered a threat to the survival of Québec's language and culture, out-of-province and international job applicants might actively avoid seeking employment in Québec, which deprives Québec companies of employees with diverse perspectives and skillsets.

Even though L2 speakers might feel that they are perceived in a certain way in Québec, these perceptions, of course, may not necessarily reflect L1 speakers' actual opinions or the perspectives of all L1 speakers for that matter. Nevertheless, the important point here is to understand why L2 speakers see themselves negatively in the eyes of L1 speakers of Québec French. One could infer, for instance, that L2 speakers' perceptions develop from the reactions they receive from L1 speakers or from observations or stories heard about the experiences of other L2 speakers. Another source of negative perceptions might stem from the anti-English atmosphere that L2 speakers may infer from Québec legislation and media. For example, in the past few years alone, there have been plentiful media stories concerning the use of French in Québec, such as about abandoning the "Hi" in "Bonjour, Hi" greetings (Plante, 2019) or about some businesses having too much English in their social media profiles (Olivier, 2022). In the legislative domain, the Québec government has similarly adopted multiple language measures, including recent legislation that restricts English education and services (Bill 96, 2021) and limits opportunities of non-locals to come to the province for English education (Lapierre & Bongiorno, 2023). The overwhelming message conveyed by the government and the media is that English has no place in Québec, potentially making L2 French speakers (most of whom also speak English) feel like they are also unwanted and unwelcomed in the province. With this heightened sense that L2 speakers and their linguistic behaviors are seen as a threat, and with L1 French speakers in Montréal having the most positive attitudes toward the protection of French (Feng et al., 2023), any negative reactions that L2 speakers encounter from L1 speakers may be

quickly interpreted as discrimination by accent or origin (Pinel, 1999, 2004). While it is up to future research to uncover more concrete reasons for any (un)conscious biases that may exist in Québec, for now, understanding the "internal life" of L2 French speakers reveals several societal and workplace implications that address their reality.

Societal and Workplace Implications

Although accent-based discrimination is present in different contexts around the world, it tends to go unnoticed in comparison to other types of discrimination. For example, Crandall et al. (2002) identified 105 potential targets of prejudice, based on previous empirical studies and media portrayals in newspapers, magazines, and television at the time, yet there was no mention of L2 or accented speakers. In fact, accent bias may even be seen as tolerable if not altogether acceptable, since social norms against accent discrimination seem to not be as strong as those against gender or racial discrimination (Giles & Watson, 2013; Ng, 2007). By gaining insight from individuals targeted by accent bias, this dissertation raises awareness of social behaviors that might go unrecognized as discriminatory or harmful and of the potentially misunderstood or unnoticed feelings and reactions of those who might experience these social behaviors.

It is not uncommon for marginalized individuals to experience microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015; Sue, 2010), which are subtle verbal or behavioral attacks that are driven by social categorization, such as when a Canadian-born, ethnically Asian individual is told they speak good English (Rahman, 2023; Ramjattan, 2023). A similar case was mentioned earlier in this chapter, where an ethnically Chinese employee was told that she speaks better French than the listener expected—an assumption likely based on expectations of who can and cannot be proficient in French. While the speaker may inadvertently view such comments as a compliment, the notions of race and language that underlie this message can have negative

consequences for its recipient. There have been abundant examples of such comments in the present dataset. One L2 employee, for example, described how L1 French customers would make comments about his accent, while another employee received similar comments from an interviewer during a job interview. In fact, with respect to L2 speakers' perceived discrimination experiences in the workplace, the most common occurrence by far included people making comments or jokes about L2 speakers' accent. Quantitatively speaking, such experiences are related to decreased employee wellbeing. From a complementary qualitative perspective, these experiences also have an isolating effect, where L2 speakers avoid individuals or situations where they expect to hear accent-focused comments. The important implication here is that individuals should be cognizant of the impact their words can have and should refrain from commenting on someone's accent, even if they think they are complementing someone by saying that they have a "cute accent."

This dissertation also sheds light on the importance of accent bias by illustrating the potential consequences it could have for L2 speakers' job prospects. Findings from this dissertation, along with previous reports (Eid, 2012; Lindberg & Trofimovich, 2023; Oreopoulos, 2011), suggest that employers or HR experts in Québec display a strong preference for L1 French speakers at the resume-screening stage, making them more likely to get an interview, and during the interview stage, making it more likely for them to be hired over L2 French speakers, especially for customer-facing positions. Not only were the L1 Arabic and L1 Spanish job applicants' resumes in this dissertation dispreferred by 14 points on average (Study 1), but the most common expectation of devaluation for the L2 employees was their expectation to be undervalued at the resume-screening stage in comparison to L1 speakers (Study 2). Some potential consequences of these findings include L2 speakers being disadvantaged in hiring

decisions (if they receive an interview), considering that they were 23 points less employable on average than L1 candidates after an interview, and L2 speakers restricting their job search to positions with limited communication or customer interactions, given a strong relationship between L2 speakers' avoidance behaviors and their expectation of devaluation. An implication that stems from these complementary findings is that employers may wish to consider anonymous resume screening procedures as a possible solution to mitigating bias (Åslund & Skans, 2012). Not only will L2 speakers potentially have a fairer opportunity for an interview, but this practice might also increase the likelihood that they will apply for the job, reassured that their language background will not affect their chances, potentially increasing the quality and diversity of applicants. Such efforts to improve recruitment processes to ensure that they are merit-based are not new in Canada. The Public Service Commission and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer in Canada conducted the Anonymized Recruitment Pilot Project, where they concealed applicants' names and personal information on resumes to see if it would have an impact on screening decisions (Government of Canada, 2018). Across 17 organizations, 2,226 candidates were reviewed by 54 reviewers. With this screening procedure, visible minorities and all other applicants were found to have equal screen-in rates. This result aligns with the encouraging findings in this dissertation, where all anonymous resumes were rated similarly in employability, indicating a qualification-based assessment, and where there were no relationships between expectation violations concerning L2 applicants' speech and the employability of these applicants presented through anonymous resumes.

Theoretical Implications

At the start of this dissertation, various theories were presented as explanations of listeners' social evaluations in the presence of L2 speech. In addition to the expectation violation

theory, which was the focus of this dissertation, other theories can account for some of the findings from this dissertation as well. To begin, the idea that individuals may express preference for speakers who speak a language variety which is similar to their own or which they are most accustomed to hearing (Ahn & Kang, 2017; Kinzler et al., 2007; Zhang & Hu, 2008) could explain why L1 Québec French listeners with HR experience preferred job candidates speaking L1 Québec French over those speaking L2 French. They simply favored, potentially unconsciously, the idea of hiring the candidate who was most similar to them in terms of their language variety. An alternative explanation for this hiring bias from a stereotype-focused perspective could be that listeners engaged in social categorization (e.g., Cargile, 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998; Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020; Singer & Eder, 1989), where upon hearing L2 French, they subsequently ascribed a certain level of status or competence to the speaker, informed solely by the stereotypes they attribute to all L2 speakers or to L2 speakers from a specific linguistic background. For example, once categorized as L2 speakers, the L2 applicants and employees in this dissertation may have been viewed as unintelligent and incompetent individuals because such characteristics would extend to all immigrants who speak L2 French. If the listeners in this dissertation truly attributed these traits to L2 applicants, for instance, it could explain why this group was deemed less employable. To give another example from Beaulieu et al. (2022a), certain professional characteristics, such as leadership, initiative, and ability to work independently, appear to be more often attributed by Québec listeners to speakers with communicative expertise in French, compared to speakers whose speaking skills are weaker. Therefore, the listeners in this dissertation may have also ascribed these professional characteristics to the L1 French job candidates, evaluating them as more employable.

Another theory that could account for the findings from this dissertation is the processing-focused explanation of listener reactions to L2 speech (Dragojevic et al., 2017). Since a more effortful listening experience deciphering the speaker's intended message tends to lead to less favorable evaluations of credibility, intelligence, and likeability (e.g., Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009; Oppenheimer, 2006; Reber et al., 1998; Reber & Schwarz, 1999), this could explain why a downgrade in L2 speakers' employability was related to how strongly listener expectations of L2 comprehensibility were violated. Put differently, when the job applicant was more difficult to understand than listeners were initially prepared for, the extent of this additional, unexpected listening effort could explain listeners' more negative reactions when evaluating the applicant's employability. Similarly, because the L2 job candidates were externally rated as being more difficult to understand than the L1 job candidates, according to the processing principle, the hiring bias against the L2 French job applicants could be generally explained by listeners' struggle to decode L2 speech (e.g., Dragojevic & Giles, 2016, 2017; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). However, even though the L1 Arabic speaker was significantly more comprehensible than the L1 Spanish speaker, both job candidates were evaluated equally in employability, suggesting that their interview outcome could not be fully explained through listeners' processing difficulty. If the processing principle applied, it would be expected that both L1 French and L1 Arabic applicants would be more employable than the L1 Spanish applicant, where the hierarchy of processing difficulty would reflect a similar employability hierarchy (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). Perhaps then, the hiring bias toward L2 speakers might be better accounted for by a stereotype perspective.

Lastly, in this dissertation, the expectation violation theory was used as the theoretical framework to test the impact of listeners' expectations on employability ratings when there was a

mismatch between their social expectations based on stereotypes (e.g., imagined speech of L2 French speakers) and L2 speakers' actual speech during an interview (Burgoon & Jones, 1976; Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005). In an experimental setting, listeners' speech expectations were indeed violated by 26 to 51 points (on a 100-point scale) in the incongruent scenarios, and it was clear that listeners' expectations are also violated in some real-life incongruent scenarios, inasmuch as some L2 employees from Study 2 were aware that their linguistic behaviors and appearance frequently violate L1 listeners' expectations. Nevertheless, there appeared to be no significant effects of expectation violations on employability in Study 1 when L2 speakers' employability in the incongruent scenarios was compared to congruent or anonymous situations, as would be predicted by the expectation violation theory (Hansen et al., 2017a, 2018). To understand the effects of violated expectations in real-life scenarios on L2 speakers' wellbeing, future research would need to interview L2 speakers about their thoughts and feelings when L1 speakers react to their speech in a surprised manner.

Although there was no strong evidence for the overall experimentally manipulated expectation violations in listener judgments of job applicants' employability, this dissertation nevertheless captured the specific expectations that listeners held about the speaker's speech prior to hearing it, namely, those about the speaker's language variety, their accent strength, and their comprehensibility, which revealed a more nuanced relationship between expectation violations and employability evaluations. That employability decreases as a function of listeners' violated expectations highlights how individuals differ in their stereotype-based expectations and that their behavior is likely based on their beliefs and experiences that shape their expectations and thus the magnitude of the violations. Put differently, initial expectations and the extent that a listener allows violated expectations to influence their employability evaluations may be

determined by certain individual characteristics or beliefs. For example, these beliefs may include how predictive an accent can be for other personal traits (Hansen, 2020), how controllable accents are by the speaker (Dragojevic et al., 2019), or how some social groups are more dominant over others in society (Hansen & Dovidio, 2016). Therefore, while violations of listener expectations may not be detrimental in every interview situation, it would be important to consider listener individual differences such as these when applying the expectation violation theory moving forward.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the studies in this dissertation have collectively provided a comprehensive understanding of how L2 French employees and job applicants are perceived in Québec, there are several ways in which future research could expand on the current findings. For example, the city in Québec where the participants resided was not factored into the analyses in Study 1 nor in Study 2. Although Study 1 raters represented 19 Québec municipalities and Study 2 participants resided in eight different cities, the majority worked and lived in Montréal. While geographical location was not originally recognized as an important factor to consider, some Study 2 participants acknowledged that there might be an important distinction between Montréal and Québec City. For instance, referring to the Study 2 questionnaire items about stigma consciousness, expectation of devaluation, and perceived discrimination, one participant stated, "For most questions, the distinction between Montréal and the rest of Québec is important." Another participant stated, "I believe accent plays an important role in job acceptance, especially in Québec City," suggesting that the issue could be more prominent in that location. With Montréal being more bilingual and multicultural than the rest of the province, it is possible that employees who work there encounter fewer experiences of perceived accent discrimination than

L2 speakers who work in other less multicultural, more French-speaking monolingual locations. This might also mean that the findings of Study 1 could have been different if more L1 raters had been sampled from municipalities other than Montréal, especially if the job posting was for a position in another city. Taken together, it could be worthwhile for future research to compare L2 employees' experiences between different regions in the province.

While this dissertation consisted of both listener- and speaker-focused studies, providing a dual perspective on accent bias, there was no study which looked at both perspectives together to see their joint effect on L2 speakers' wellbeing or career outcomes. Therefore, future research could benefit from a study which investigates how listener- and speaker-based effects may work in tandem, especially in light of Russo et al.'s (2017) suggestion that L2 speakers' perceptions of discrimination intertwine with listeners' reactions and together impact their career outcomes. One example could be to conceptually replicate Study 1 adding a speaker perspective, where the interviews would be conducted by an L1 speaker and the L2 job applicants would complete the stigma consciousness, expectation of devaluation, and perceived accent discrimination questionnaires. This would allow researchers to explore whether the stigma consciousness, expectations of devaluation, and prior experiences of discrimination that L2 speakers bring to the interview might impact their interview outcome in tandem with L1 interviewers' expectations and biases. After the interview, it could also be insightful to ask the job candidates to evaluate how likely they think they are to get hired and to explain how they think the interviewer perceived them. Findings would shed light not only on the (mis)alignment between listener and speaker perceptions of the same event, but also on whether job candidates' stigma consciousness and expectations of devaluation might impact their interview performance.

Another example could be a study that investigates the meta-stereotypes that emerged in Study 2, by adding a listener perspective to confirm the extent to which these stereotypes exist, and whether they target all L2 speakers, or only those with certain L1 backgrounds (e.g., L1 English speakers). L1 Québec French speakers could be provided with images and profiles of both L1 and L2 French speakers from various language backgrounds and asked to rate their expectations of the individual based on rating scales inspired by the different dimensions of stereotypes that emerged in Study 2. For example, using a 0–100 scale (*strongly disagree–strongly agree*), they could rate statements such as, "This person is likely not willing to learn French or put effort into learning the language," "This person is likely competent at their job in Québec" (reverse score), "This person is likely a foreigner and not from Québec," and "This person and others like them are diluting the French language and culture in Québec." The level of (dis)agreement with such statements would reveal the extent to which these stereotypes exist among L1 French speakers in Québec, while the L2 speakers (just as Study 2 participants) would independently also provide their insight on whether they agree that L1 speakers view L2 speakers along similar dimensions.

A third example of a possible future project could be a qualitative study that includes interviews with both L1 and L2 French-speaking employees to obtain a joint perspective on L2 employees' behaviors at work. The L2 employees could provide their accounts of how they feel and act in their French-majority workplace (e.g., being hesitant to speak up at meetings, avoid colleague interactions for fear of being judged by their accent), while the L1 employees could share their observations of their L2 colleagues and their interpretations of these colleagues' behavior at work. For example, do L1 employees find L2 employees to be unsociable or quiet at meetings? Do they see them turning down leadership opportunities? And how do they interpret

and explain these behaviors? Do they find L2 colleagues' accents to be a limitation at work? This would not only shed light on L1 employees' awareness of L2 employees' experiences and the reasons behind their actions, but comparisons of themes that emerge from the two perspectives would highlight possible gaps between how L2 employees think they are perceived at work and how L1 employees actually perceive them.

Conclusion

The overall goal of this dissertation was to investigate how L2 French speakers are evaluated during the hiring process through the lens of the expectation violation theory, and to examine how they experience workplace accent discrimination in a French-Canadian context. Ultimately, L1 French-speaking HR experts' stereotype-based expectations did not have a negative impact on L2 French job candidates' employability in comparison to anonymous situations where stereotypes and expectations were not evoked. While this was an encouraging finding, equally qualified L2 speakers were still dispreferred to L1 speakers for an entry-level waitress position, and a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between violations of various expectations about L2 job applicants' speech and their employability showed that when L2 job applicants were less comprehensible and spoke a less standard French than expected from their resume, they were more likely to be downgraded in employability. Despite the seemingly weak effects of expectations on L2 speakers' job outcomes, more is revealed on this issue from the L2 speakers' perspective. L2 employees perceived that L1 speakers hold various stereotypes and expectations about them, and these meta-perceptions alone were related to various wellbeing and behavioral outcomes at work that could ultimately impact L2 employees' career choice, workplace integration, job satisfaction, and career advancement. Within the sociopolitical complex, yet linguistically rich context of Québec, it is important to recognize the existence of

accent bias, readjust certain social norms that currently favor comments toward one's accent, and understand the feelings and behaviors of L2 employees that are driven by perceptions of accent discrimination at work. With this understanding of listeners' accent bias and speakers' perceived accent stigmatization, the findings from this dissertation can inform future work focusing on mitigating accent-based discrimination in the Québec workplace and promoting the inclusion and acceptance of accented employees.

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Appendix A – Job Advertisement (Original French Version Followed by Translated English Version)

Original French Version

Serveuse

Bâton Rouge Anjou, Montréal, QC

DESCRIPTION:

Les serveurs et serveuses accueillent les clients à la table selon les normes de service Bâton Rouge. Ils présentent le menu, font des suggestions et répondent à toutes questions reliées à la nourriture ou aux breuvages. Ils utilisent des techniques de ventes suggestives. Ils prennent les commandes et servent les clients selon le protocole de service Bâton Rouge. Ils préparent la mise en place des desserts. Ils peuvent occuper les mêmes fonctions que les hôtesses et les commis-débarrasseurs. Une formation en cours d'emploi est offerte.

FONCTIONS PRINCIPALES:

- Accueillir les clients, présenter le menu, faire des suggestions et répondre aux questions à propos des aliments et des breuvages
- Prendre les commandes et les transmettre au personnel de cuisine
- Effectuer le service des breuvages, vins, alcools et cocktails
- Servir des repas et assurer un service de qualité dans la salle à manger
- Servir les desserts
- Facturer les repas et/ou les consommations, encaisser des sommes d'argent; balancer les transactions financières de la journée
- Appliquer les règles d'hygiène et de salubrité
- Appliquer les règles de sécurité
- S'assurer de la propreté constante de son poste de travail
- Organiser efficacement son poste de travail et son travail
- Débarrasser et nettoyer les tables dans la salle à manger

COMPÉTENCES ET QUALIFICATIONS :

- Aucune expérience préalable n’est exigée.
- Français (Obligatoire)
- La communication orale et l'écoute sont exigées
- Un sens du détail et une ouverture au changement sont exigés
- L'entregent, l'esprit d'équipe, le sens de la collaboration, la capacité d'adaptation à une situation
- Une apparence soignée, la confiance en soi, l'intégrité, la capacité à gérer le stress, le dynamisme, l'autonomie et la flexibilité sont essentiels

Translated English Version

Waitress

Baton Rouge Anjou, Montréal, QC

DESCRIPTION:

The waiters and waitresses greet customers at the table according to Bâton Rouge service standards. They present the menu, make suggestions and answer all questions related to food or beverages. They use suggestive selling techniques. They take orders and serve customers according to the Bâton Rouge service protocol. They prepare the setting up of the desserts. They can perform the same functions as hostesses and busboys. On-the-job training is offered.

MAIN DUTIES:

- Greet customers, present the menu, make suggestions and answer questions about food and beverages
- Take orders and transmit them to kitchen staff
- Serve beverages, wines, spirits and cocktails
- Serve meals and ensure quality service in the dining room
- Serve the desserts
- Bill meals and/or drinks, collect sums of money; balance the financial transactions of the day
- Apply the rules of hygiene and sanitation
- Apply safety rules
- Ensure the constant cleanliness of your workstation
- Efficiently organize your workstation and your work
- Clear and clean tables in the dining room

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS:

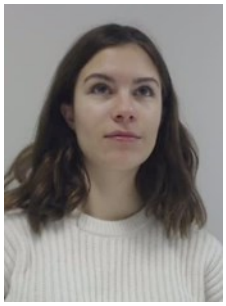
- No previous experience required
- French (Mandatory)
- Effective oral communication and listening skills are required
- A sense of detail and openness to change is required
- Interpersonal skills, team spirit, a sense of collaboration, the ability to adapt to a situation
- A well-groomed appearance, self-confidence, integrity, the ability to deal with stress, dynamism, autonomy and flexibility are essential

Appendix B – Example Resumes (Original French Versions Followed by Translated English Versions)

Original French Versions

L1 French Resume

Raphaëlle GAGNON



Expériences Professionnelles

Serveuse *Février 2022 – Février 2023 (1 an)*
Chez Gaston (Sherbrooke, Québec, CA)

Tâches effectuées :
- Accueillir les clients à leur arrivée
- Recommander des plats ou breuvages et répondre aux questions des clients
- Prendre les commandes et servir les plats
- Préparer les tables avant le service, les nettoyer après le service

Études et Formations

Baccalauréat - Sociologie *Décembre 2021*
Université de Sherbrooke (Sherbrooke, Québec, CA)

Permis d'hygiène et salubrité

L2 French Resume

Fatima ALZAHRANI

Expériences Professionnelles

Serveuse *Mars 2022 – Mars 2023 (1 an)*
Milano Restaurant (Amman, Jordanie)

Tâches effectuées :

- Accueillir les clients
- Prendre des commandes
- Conseiller des repas et des breuvages aux clients
- Nettoyage de la salle à manger

Études et Formations

Baccalauréat - Histoire *Décembre 2022*
Université de Jordanie (Amman, Jordanie)

Permis d'hygiène et salubrité

Anonymous Resume

Expériences Professionnelles

Serveuse *Janvier 2022 – Janvier 2023 (1 an)*

Restaurant Augusto

Tâches effectuées :

- Accueil des clients
- Responsable de bien connaitre la carte et de conseiller les clients
- Service en salle ; prendre les commandes des clients
- Nettoyage et préparation des tables

Études et Formations

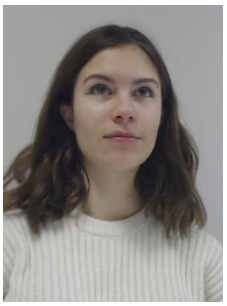
Baccalauréat - Sociologie *Mai 2022*

Permis d'hygiène et salubrité

Translated English versions

L1 French Resume:

Raphaëlle GAGNON



Professional Experiences

Waitress *February 2022 – February 2023 (1 year)*
Chez Gaston (Sherbrooke, Québec, CA)

Tasks:

- Welcome the customers when they arrive
- Recommend meals or beverages and respond to customers' questions
- Take orders and serve meals
- Prepare the tables before service and clean the tables after service

Education and Training

Bachelor – Sociology *December 2021*
Sherbrooke University (Sherbrooke, Québec, CA)

Hygiene and sanitation permit

L2 French Resume:

Fatima ALZAHRANI

Professional Experiences

Waitress *March 2022 – March 2023 (1 year)*
Milano Restaurant (Amman, Jordan)

Tasks:

- Welcome the customers
- Take orders
- Advise the customers on menu items
- Clean the dining room

Education and Training

Bachelor – History *December 2022*
University of Jordan (Ammam, Jordan)

Hygiene and sanitation permit

Anonymous Resume:

Professional Experiences

Waitress *January 2022 – January 2023 (1 year)*

Restaurant Augusto

Tasks:

- Welcoming customers
- Responsible for knowing the menu well and advising customers
- Customer service and processing orders
- Cleaning and preparation of tables

Education and Training

Bachelor – Sociology *May 2022*

Hygiene and sanitation permit

Appendix C – Scripted Interview Greetings Recorded by Each Speaker

Table C1

Scripted Interview Greetings Recorded by Each Speaker with the English Translation

Speaker	Interview Greeting	English Translation
L1 Spanish Speaker	Bonjour! Je suis ravie de faire votre connaissance. Merci de me recevoir, c'est vraiment un plaisir d'être ici. Comment allez-vous?	*Hello! I am delighted to meet you. Thank you for having me, it is really a pleasure to be here. How are you?*
	Bonjour! Je suis ravie de vous rencontrer. Merci pour cette occasion de discuter de ce poste. Comment allez-vous aujourd'hui?	*Hello! Nice to meet you. Thanks for the opportunity to discuss this position. How are you today?*
	Bonjour! Je vous remercie de me recevoir, cela me fait plaisir de vous rencontrer. Comment allez-vous ce matin?	*Hello! Thank you for having me, it is a pleasure to meet you. How are you this morning?*
L1 Arabic Speaker	Bonjour! Enchantée. Je suis heureuse d'être ici aujourd'hui, merci de me recevoir. Comment allez-vous ce matin?	*Hello! Nice to meet you. I am happy to be here today, thank you for having me. How are you this morning?*
	Bonjour! Je vous remercie de me recevoir aujourd'hui. C'est un plaisir de vous rencontrer. Comment allez-vous?	*Hello! Thank you for having me here today. It is a pleasure to meet you. How are you?*
	Bonjour! Je vous remercie pour cette occasion et je suis ravie de vous rencontrer. Comment allez-vous aujourd'hui?	*Hello! Thank you for this opportunity and I am delighted to meet you. How are you today?*

L1 Québec French Speaker	Bonjour! Enchantée de faire votre connaissance. Merci de me recevoir, je suis ravie d'être ici. Comment allez-vous?	*Hello! Nice to meet you. Thank you for having me, I am delighted to be here. How are you?*
	Bonjour! Merci de m'avoir invité aujourd'hui pour cet entretien. C'est un plaisir de vous rencontrer. Comment allez-vous?	*Hello! Thank you for inviting me today for this interview. It is a pleasure to meet you. How are you?*
	Bonjour! Enchantée de faire votre connaissance. Merci de m'avoir invitée pour cet entretien. Comment allez-vous ce matin?	*Hello! Nice to meet you. Thank you for inviting me for this interview. How are you this morning?*
L1 European French Speaker	Bonjour! Enchantée de faire votre connaissance. Je vous remercie pour cette occasion. Comment allez-vous aujourd'hui?	*Hello! Nice to meet you. Thank you for this opportunity. How are you today?*
	Bonjour! Je suis ravie de faire votre connaissance. Je vous remercie de me recevoir aujourd'hui. Comment allez-vous?	*Hello! I am delighted to meet you. Thank you for having me here today. How are you?*
	Bonjour! Je suis heureuse de vous rencontrer. Je vous remercie de m'avoir invitée pour cet entretien. Comment allez-vous?	*Hello! I'm happy to meet you. Thank you for inviting me to this interview. How are you?*

Appendix D – Comparisons of the Quality of Candidates' Responses Within Each Interview

Table D1

Results of Paired-Samples T Tests Comparing the Response Quality Preratings Within Each Interview Set for Each Speaker

Question Set	Response 1 *M (SD)*	Response 2 *M (SD)*	Mean Difference	Paired-samples *t* test *t*	*p*
L1 Québec French Applicant					
Set 1	77.70 (13.77)	70.30 (21.33)	–7.4	0.96	.360
Set 2	67.20 (21.90)	60.10 (27.84)	–7.1	1.25	.244
Set 3	78.70 (19.08)	86.00 (11.36)	7.3	–1.58	.149
L1 European French Applicant					
Set 1	73.90 (14.32)	71.00 (26.80)	2.9	0.27	.794
Set 2	74.40 (26.59)	80.10 (18.50)	5.7	–0.75	.471
Set 3	78.90 (14.26)	85.30 (12.14)	6.3	–1.40	.196
L1 Spanish Applicant (L2 French)					
Set 1	68.80 (13.11)	76.30 (21.02)	7.5	–1.87	.095
Set 2	59.30 (31.17)	66.60 (17.83)	7.3	–0.67	.518
Set 3	76.80 (15.66)	65.80 (20.68)	–11.0	1.88	.093
L1 Arabic Applicant (L2 French)					
Set 1	70.30 (19.24)	75.50 (16.42)	5.2	–1.03	.330
Set 2	59.70 (24.19)	61.60 (25.25)	1.9	–0.17	.871
Set 3	68.40 (19.44)	64.60 (28.13)	–3.8	0.42	.688

Appendix E – Descriptive Statistics of Speakers' Speech Characteristics Based on Preratings

Table E1

Preratings of Speech Characteristics for Each Speaker

	Comprehen-sibility	Accentedness	Standard French	French competence
French variety	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Québec French	91.25 (10.93)	78.33 (24.09)	78.83 (21.48)	89.88 (11.08)
European French	88.83 (12.04)	69.40 (24.13)	85.58 (18.42)	88.77 (12.57)
L2 French (L1 Spanish)	60.23 (21.38)	33.03 (18.28)	58.10 (23.58)	60.33 (16.79)
L2 French (L1 Arabic)	69.78 (20.49)	37.42 (17.46)	65.97 (22.95)	67.57 (17.92)

Note. Ratings on a 100-point scale, where 100 meant "easy to understand," "not at all accented," "speaking standard French," and "very competent."

Appendix F – Descriptive Statistics and Two-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA Analysis for the L1 European French Speaker Used as Distractor Audios

Table F1

Means (Standard Deviations) for Employability Ratings by Condition and Interview Stage for the European French Speaker

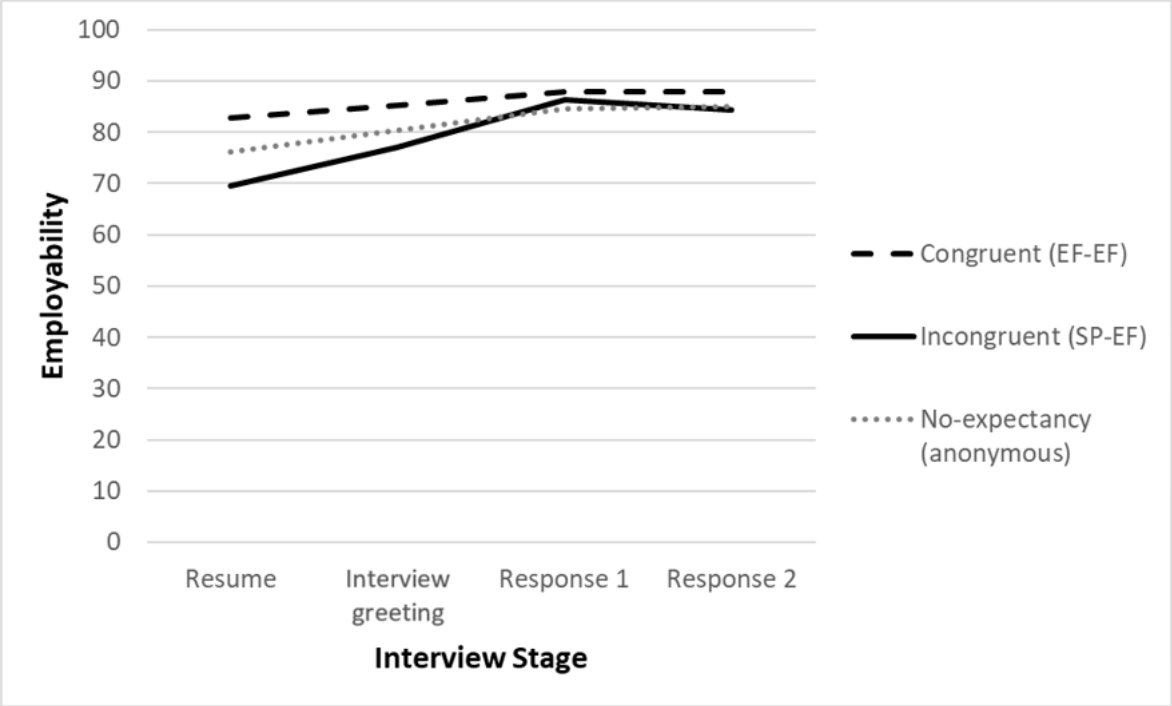
Resume	Expectation	Interview stage			
		Resume	Greeting	Response 1	Response2
L1 European French					
L1 French	Congruent	82.80 (18.06)	85.18 (12.59)	87.82 (11.11)	87.85 (14.18)
L2 French	Incongruent	69.65 (22.44)	77.15 (18.75)	86.47 (14.18)	84.38 (20.71)
Anonymous	Control	76.15 (24.43)	80.29 (17.37)	84.49 (16.42)	85.09 (16.70)

The analysis of the L1 European French applicant (illustrated in Figure F1) revealed a statistically significant main effect for expectation condition, $F(2, 108) = 8.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .133$, a significant main effect for time, $F(1.64, 88.39) = 20.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .271$, and a significant two-way interaction, $F(3.91, 211.36) = 3.26$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .057$, which was explored through tests of interaction effects. When considering the expectation condition, the L1 European French resume depicted a significantly more employable candidate than the anonymous resume, $M_{diff} = +6.66$, $t(54) = 2.61$, $p = .035$, $d = 0.35$, and the L1 Spanish resume, $M_{diff} = +13.15$, $t(54) = 4.00$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.54$. Following the interview greeting, the candidate depicted through the L1 European French resume (congruent condition) remained significantly more employable than the anonymous candidate (no-expectancy), $M_{diff} = +4.89$, $t(54) = 3.20$, $p = .007$, $d = 0.43$, and the resume-depicted L1 Spanish candidate (incongruent), $M_{diff} = +8.04$, $t(54) = 4.63$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.62$. However, by

the final evaluation, there were no differences in employability between conditions (*t*s < .205, *p*s > .840).

Figure F1

Employability of the L1 European French Applicant in Each Condition Throughout the Interview



Appendix G – Pearson Correlations Between Speech Expectation Violations and Employability in the Congruent and No-Expectancy Scenarios

Table G1

Relationships Between Violations of Speech Expectations and Ratings of Employability at Different Interview Stages in the Congruent Scenario

	Interview stage		
Expectation violations	Greeting	Response 1	Response 2
L1 Spanish applicant			
Comprehensibility	**.38**	**.26**	.18
Accent prestige	**.28**	**.33**	**.29**
Accentedness	**.25**	.24	.23
L1 Arabic applicant			
Comprehensibility	.22	**.28**	**.36**
Accent prestige	.21	**.35**	**.30**
Accentedness	.15	**.36**	**.26**
L1 Québec French applicant			
Comprehensibility	–.03	.23	.17
Accent prestige	–.04	.12	–.12
Accentedness	.01	.05	–.10

Note. Correlation coefficients exceeding the benchmark for a small effect ($r \geq |.25|$) are bolded.

Table G2

Relationships Between Violations of Speech Expectations and Ratings of Employability at Different Interview Stages in the No-Expectancy Scenario

	Interview stage		
Expectation violations	Greeting	Response 1	Response 2
L1 Spanish applicant			
Comprehensibility	.16	–.08	.08
Accent prestige	.10	.03	.11
Accentedness	–.06	–.11	–.01
L1 Arabic applicant			
Comprehensibility	.16	.22	.23
Accent prestige	.21	.13	.24
Accentedness	–.05	–.05	.03
L1 Québec French applicant			
Comprehensibility	–.23	–.15	–.18
Accent prestige	–.20	–.06	–.16
Accentedness	.19	.04	.10

Appendix H – Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item using the following 100-point scale:

Strongly disagree ---------- ***Strongly agree***

1. Stereotypes about nonnative French speakers have not affected me personally. (Reverse)
2. I never worry that my speech will be viewed as stereotypically nonnative. (Reverse)
3. When interacting with native Québec French speakers, I feel like they view my speech in terms of the fact that I am a nonnative French speaker.
4. Most native Québec French speakers do not judge nonnative French speakers on the basis of their accent. (Reverse)
5. Me being a nonnative French speaker does not influence how native Québec French speakers act with me. (Reverse)
6. I almost never think about the fact that I am a nonnative French speaker when I interact with native Québec French speakers. (Reverse)
7. Me being a nonnative French speaker does not influence how people act with me. (Reverse)
8. Most native Québec French speakers have a lot more biased thoughts about nonnative accents than they actually express.
9. I often think that native Québec French speakers are unfairly accused of holding biases against nonnative French speakers. (Reverse)
10. Most native Québec French speakers have a problem viewing nonnative French speakers as equals.

Appendix I – Expectation of Devaluation Based on Accent Questionnaire

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item using the following 100-point scale:

Strongly disagree ---------- ***Strongly agree***

1. Most employers in Québec would *not* hire someone who speaks with an accent like mine, even if he or she were competent in French.
2. Most employers in Québec will hire someone who speaks French like me if he or she is qualified for the job. (Reverse)
3. Most employers in Québec will pass over the application of a nonnative French speaker like me in favor of a native French speaker.
4. Once an interviewer in Québec hears a job applicant with a French accent like mine, they will take his or her responses less seriously.
5. Most employers in Québec believe that people who have a French accent like mine are just as intelligent as native Québec French speakers. (Reverse)
6. Most employers in Québec are more likely to give a promotion to a native Québec French speaker before a nonnative French speaker like me.
7. Most employees in Québec would treat a nonnative French speaker colleague like me just as they would treat a native French speaker colleague. (Reverse)
8. Most employees in Québec would willingly accept a nonnative French speaker like me as a competent colleague. (Reverse)
9. Most native Québec French employees have more respect for their colleagues who speak French like them.
10. Customers in Québec are more likely to make a complaint about an employee who has a French accent like mine than they are to make a complaint about a native Québec French employee.
11. Most customers in Québec would be happy to be served by an employee with a French accent like mine. (Reverse)
12. Job applicants or employees who speak French like me are discriminated against in Québec because of their accent.

Appendix J – Perceived Accent Discrimination Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item using the following 100-point scale:

Strongly disagree ---------- ***Strongly agree***

1. At work, I feel uncomfortable when others make jokes or negative commentaries about my accent when I speak French.
2. At work, I sometimes feel that my accent in French is a limitation.
3. At work, many people have stereotypes about people like me who speak French with an accent.
4. At work, people think that I am unsociable when in fact I often refrain from speaking in French because I have an accent.
5. At work, I sometimes feel that people actively try to stop me from advancing because of my accent in French.
6. At work, people pressure me to reduce my accent in French.
7. At work, I do not get enough recognition because of my accent in French.
8. My accent in French is a limitation at work.
9. At work, I feel that others exclude me from their activities because of my accent in French.
10. At work, people look down upon me when I speak French with an accent.

Appendix K – Employment Experiences Questionnaire

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item using the following 100-point scale:

Strongly disagree ---------- ***Strongly agree***

Behavioral Items

1. There are certain jobs in Québec that I avoid applying to because they require too much communication with customers.
2. I sometimes intentionally avoid interacting with certain colleagues at work.
3. I often feel uncomfortable or even avoid voicing my opinions, concerns, or ideas during work meetings.
4. I would leave my current job if I could.
5. I often take on a leadership role at work. (Reverse)

Affective Items

1. I have always felt a sense of belonging at my workplace in Québec. (Reverse)
2. I often feel stressed at work.
3. I am concerned about the number of opportunities I have in Québec for a promotion or professional advancement.
4. I feel confident with my skills at my job in Québec. (Reverse)
5. I feel respected at my job in Québec. (Reverse)

Appendix L – Background Questionnaire (Study 2)

1. What is your gender? _____
2. What is your first language? _____
3. Where were you born? _____
4. How long have you lived in Québec? _____ years _____ months
5. What is the location and type of your current job? _____
6. What is your current or last degree? _____
7. How many years have you been studying/speaking French? _____ years _____ months
8. Using the slider scales below, please rate your ability to speak and listen to French:

   Speaking: Not fluent at all ---------- Very fluent

   Listening: Not fluent at all ---------- Very fluent
9. How many job interviews have you done in French? _____
10. How often do you speak French at work? (0% of the time ------- 100% of the time)
11. What percentage of your colleagues are native French speakers?
12. How long have you been employed in Québec at a job (or jobs) where you have had to speak French? _____ years _____ months
13. What type of job(s) have you worked in Québec where you had to speak French?

    _____
14. Are you aware of any stereotypes that native Québec French speakers have toward nonnative speakers of French? Please provide some examples.

Appendix M – Intercorrelations of Employment Experiences Questionnaire Items

Table M1

Intercorrelations Between the Affective and Behavioral Items from the Employment Experiences Questionnaire

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Avoid leadership roles at work	—									
2 Avoid voicing opinions at meetings	.35	—								
3 Avoid interacting with colleagues	.33	.33	—							
4 Would like to quit job	.34	.39	.12	—						
5 Avoid customer-facing jobs	.38	.18	.22	.18	—					
6 Diminished sense of belonging at work	.47	.23	.21	.40	.22	—				
7 Stressed at work	.22	.31	.33	.33	.03	.13	—			
8 Lack of confidence with skills at job	.45	.18	.28	.06	.24	.31	.21	—		
9 Feel disrespected at work	.40	.27	.01	.50	.32	.44	.10	.08	—	
10 Concerned about promotion	.36	.37	.23	.41	.31	.54	.22	.23	.23	—

Appendix N – Participant Comments Describing Positive Experiences

“Fortunately, in my work all people from my manager, colleague and customers respect me and I never see they discriminate against me. At first days of my work, sometimes I avoid to talk with my colleagues and manager because of my accent in French but they try to talk with me and act like I am not different with others who are native in French. In the interview, I said to the manager I am not perfect in French so I cannot answer customers, and I prefer to work in a kitchen and do not work in the front, she said you did not think like this, people of Quebec are interested to see immigrant like you, because you try to learn a new language so people appreciate you, because you are smart and they know it is difficult to learn a new language. This conversation increased my confidence so I try to talk with people in French and it is so useful for me, because I see trying to speak with native people can boost your accent and you can learn a lot from them.” (Montréal pastry chef)

“The people that I've encountered in Québec have been overwhelmingly kind, generous and welcoming. The laws passed by the provincial government, the exclusionist policies and the publicly shared opinions of politicians about immigrants and anglophones have outraged, angered and saddened me.” (Québec City data analyst)

“I’m very appreciated at work and do not have any negative experiences (French or otherwise). I have a strong personality and is very social with everyone and patients are very happy about their services 95% of the time I would say.” (Boisbriand physiotherapist)

“I feel that Montreal is a very open-minded city where people don't discriminate an individual for his ability to speak French or English because both languages are as official.” (Montréal barista)

“I'm fortunate for my two jobs right now and don't feel any discrimination. The clientele is good and understanding when I tell them I'm going to switch in English to explain something to them. If I were to answer this survey when I was at my first job my answers would be much closer to strongly agree.” (Montréal bartender)

“From my experience, only people have made jokes about my French but in a friendly way. They have treated me correctly and respectfully always. Definitely, my non-Québec French is a limitation, but because we do not use the same words.” (Montréal webpage developer)

Appendix O – Scatterplots of Perceived Accent Discrimination with an Example Behavioral Item (Avoid Leadership Roles) and an Example Affective Item (Feel Disrespected)

Figure O1

Scatterplots of Raters' Avoidance of Leadership Roles at Work and Feelings of Disrespect at Work as a Function of their Perceived Accent Discrimination at Work, with the Linear and Loess Trendlines Illustrating the Best Fit to the Data