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**Native French Speakers' Attitudes Toward English
in France, Switzerland and Belgium**

Abstract

Language attitudes and their effects on foreign language acquisition have been subject to extensive research. The consensus amongst theorists and teachers is that positive attitudes toward a language facilitate learning and end proficiency in that target language. Although studies looking into language attitudes have been conducted in a multitude of environments and toward a wide array of languages and dialects, no research has yet focused on comparing the attitudes of French, Swiss and Belgian speakers of French toward the English language. This study looks into the differences in attitudes of speakers in these three regions and aims at finding a correlation with their respective English proficiency. Evidence of attitudes was gathered through an online survey using a Matched Guise technique. The results of this study indicate that French speakers of Switzerland exhibit the most positive attitudes toward English, attitudes that correspond to the significantly higher proficiency found in Switzerland. Confirming the hypothesis based on proficiency and existing literature, France showed the least positive attitudes out of the three surveyed countries. French speakers from Belgium, on the other hand, did not prefer French to English as anticipated on the basis of the declining English proficiency recorded in Wallonia. These findings indicate a need for future research into the effects of attitudes on language proficiency across the different French-speaking populations.

Keywords: language attitudes, French speakers, English, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Matched Guise, English proficiency

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1. Introduction

Attitudes toward languages differ from one cultural group to another. This thesis is a comparative study of French speakers' language attitudes toward the English language. The three groups whose attitudes will be examined are French-speaking Millennials in France, Switzerland and Belgium. The introduction presents existing theories and research on attitudes and proficiency and an overview of the French, Swiss and Belgian curricula for English as a foreign language as well as their reported English proficiency, and finally establishes research questions for this study. Section 2 presents the methodology used in this study, including a presentation of the matched guise technique, a detailed procedure and an overview of participants. Section 3 presents the results of the study and a discussion comparing results to the original hypotheses. Finally, a summary of findings, study limitations and opportunities for further research are stated in the conclusion.

1.1 Attitudes and proficiency

It is widely accepted among teachers and researchers that language learning and ultimately language proficiency are closely linked to language attitudes (Baker, 1992; Dörnyei, 2003; Gaies & Beebe, 1991; Zhao, 2015). According to Dörnyei (2003), learning a second language (L2) is different from other school subjects on the grounds that

while an L2 is a 'learnable' school subject in that discrete elements of the communication code (e.g., grammatical rules and lexical items) can be taught explicitly, it is also socially and culturally bound, which makes language learning a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L2 culture. (p. 4)

According to the previously cited works, a learner's attitudes toward the target language positively or negatively affect language acquisition and the resulting language proficiency.

The concept of language attitude has various definitions that generally fall into either the mentalist or the behaviorist approach (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970). The behaviorist view suggests that attitudes are dependent variables that must be observed by looking at subjects' reactions to the language during concrete exchanges. The mentalist view, on the other hand, understands attitudes as internal mental states that are not directly observable, and thus ought to be retrieved through interviews, questionnaires or any method that allows the researcher to extract data from the subjects. The main advantage of this approach is that attitude remains an independent variable in the form of a psychological constant which is not conditioned by the situation in which subjects are observed (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970). Similarly to most modern studies, the present study follows the mentalist approach.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed a framework for understanding the different motivations in second language learning. According to this theory, there are two types of language attitudes; instrumental and integrative. Instrumental attitudes deal with achievement and recognition factors attributed to the language. Practically, this means subjects recognize the language in terms of status values, such as a specific level of language proficiency leading to certain professional opportunities. Integrative attitudes, on the other hand, refer to the perceived value of the language for attachment to a speech community. Hence, learners of a language with predominantly integrative motivations will pursue proficiency for social gains.

Extensive research exists in the domain of language attitudes, ranging from attitudes toward a language to attitudes toward specific dialects and accents (Alford & Strothel, 1990; Bayard, Weatherall, Gallois & Pittam, 2001; Gentry El-Dash & Busnardo, 2001; Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960; Oakes, 2001, Sicam & Lucas, 2016). Studies on language attitudes of French speakers toward English have been conducted in Canada (Lambert et al., 1960), where the bilingualism of the country and particularly language planning policies call for such research, and showed that negative attitudes toward English in

Quebec negatively affected proficiency. While researchers have looked into the attitudes toward English of French speakers in France (Oakes, 2001), comparative studies looking at French-speaking countries side-by-side have yet to be conducted.

1.2 Curricula for English as a foreign language in France, Belgium and Switzerland

English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught as part of the mandatory curriculum in France, Belgium and Switzerland. In France, English as a foreign language started being taught in school in 1989, with the implementation of the EILE, *Enseignement d'Initiation aux Langues Étrangères*, 'Introductory Teaching to Foreign Languages' (Council of Europe, 2011). As of 2002, English is a compulsory subject starting in primary school. Students are taught English for a minimum of 1 hour weekly from preparatory class CP, *Classe Préparatoire*, to the end of elementary class CE2, *Classe Élémentaire 2* (students in these classes are 6-8 years old), 1.5 to 2 hours in the two years of middle class CM1, *Classe Moyenne 1*, and CM2, *Classe Moyenne 2* (9-11 years old). In 6th grade (11-12 years old), the first year of secondary school, 4 hours a week are dedicated to teaching English as a foreign language, followed by 3 hours weekly from 5th grade (12-13 years old) until the end of compulsory education (16 years old), with the opportunity for students to increase their number of foreign language hours.

However, while EFL education starts early, the required level to be acquired by the end of 6th grade (11-12 years old) is only A1, 'breakthrough or beginner', the lowest level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2011), and the targeted level by the end of 3rd grade (14-15 years old) is A2, 'waystage or elementary'.

Language policies in Switzerland diverge from one region to another. In the present Swiss constitution (effective since 2000), four languages are granted official national status; German, French, Italian and Romansch. Aside from national policies directed at the protection of language diversity and representation, language education policies are the responsibility of the cantons, the Swiss equivalent of federal states (Grin & Korth, 2005).

While most cantons are monolingual, language boundaries do not match cantonal borders. Out of 26 cantons, three (Fribourg/Freiburg, Valais/Wallis and Berne/Bern) are bilingual (French/German) and one (Graubunden/Grischun/Grigioni) is trilingual (German/Romantsch/Italian). As a result, accurately mapping the EFL curriculum of French-speaking Switzerland proves to be problematic, as some institutions may introduce English in 3rd grade (7-8 years old) and others in 7th grade (11-12 years old) depending on whether English is given L2 or L3 status, a choice independently made by each canton.

However, while cantons have free choice of language policies, the CDIP (*Conférence suisse des Directeurs cantonaux de l'Instruction Publique*, 'Swiss Standing Conference of Cantonal Education Ministers') issues national recommendations for the teaching of languages that are, to this day, applied by all 26 cantons. Based on a recommendation endorsed in 1975, the teaching of a foreign language starting in primary school is mandatory in all 26 cantons. In practice, however, the L2 taught to pupils in Switzerland is in most cases not English but a second national language (customarily German in the French-speaking regions). Up until 2004, the French-speaking cantons within the CDIP advocated the teaching of German starting in 3rd grade (class in which students are 7-8 years old) and English starting in 7th grade (11-12 years old). English is then taught for four hours weekly for the remainder of compulsory education (15 years old) as well as in post-secondary education (15 to 18 or 19 years old) with an opportunity to learn a third foreign language (CIIP, 2003). Similarly to France, the target by the end of Swiss compulsory education is for students to meet the competencies of level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2011). As of 2012, however, primary-school teachers are being certified to teach English alongside German in primary schools, in an attempt to fully introduce English in 5th grade throughout the French-speaking cantons (Elminger, 2007; Grin & Korth, 2005).

Finally, in French-speaking Belgium, second-language learning differs between Wallonia and the Brussels area. In Wallonia, learning a second language is mandatory starting in the fifth year of primary school, *cinquième primaire* (in which students are 10-11 years old), for 2 hours a week. The second language can be either English, Dutch or German. In the Brussels area, however, second language learning starts in the third year of primary school, *troisième primaire*, (8-9 years old) and is imperatively Dutch. In secondary school, the same initial foreign languages (English, Dutch or German) are taught in Degree 1, *Degré 1* (12-14 years old). A second foreign language (English, Dutch, German, Spanish or Italian) is optional starting in Degree 2, *Degré 2* (14-16 years old). Finally, students have the opportunity to choose a third foreign language (among the previously proposed languages) to learn in Degree 3, *Degré 3* (16-18 years old). All mandatory and optional language classes are taught 4 hours a week (De Samblanc, 2005). In contrast to France and Switzerland, the Belgian curriculum does not impose learning English as a second language at any stage of mandatory education. Language distribution statistics (illustrated in table 1 and 2) show that as of 2003¹, English as a foreign language was only learned by 56.4% of all students, and in a majority of cases only starting in Degree 2 (14 years old)(De Samblanc, 2005).

Table 1: 2003 distribution of foreign languages in Belgian secondary school in percentage of students (adapted from De Samblanc, 2005, p.2)

DU: Dutch EN: English GE: German SP: Spanish IT: Italian

Foreign language 1			Foreign language 2					Foreign language 3				
DU	EN	GE	DU	EN	GE	SP	IT	DU	EN	GE	SP	IT
60.7%	37.7%	1.6%	25.8%	69.8%	3.1%	1.1%	0.2%	3.2%	7.6%	31.8%	55.1%	2.2%

¹ 2003's primary and secondary school students are today's young adults, the target of this study. For this reason, looking at 2003 statistics is relevant.

Table 2: 2003 cumulative distribution of foreign languages learned in Belgium in percentage of students (De Samblanc, 2005, p.2)

Dutch	English	German	Spanish	Italian
59.72%	56.4%	3.78%	2.74%	0.16%

To summarize, although French pupils are often introduced to English sooner than Swiss pupils, France and Switzerland implement similar EFL curricula and target proficiency levels by the end of compulsory education (A2). Hence, any potential gap in English proficiency cannot be explained (at least not primarily) by divergent education practices. In Belgium, on the other hand, there is no mandatory English education, although most students choose to learn English at some stage of their curriculum. However, as the age of introduction to the language greatly varies between regions and individual students, no general target proficiency can be expected by the end of mandatory school. As a result, the Belgian system evidently produces fewer and on average less proficient students of English.

1.3 English proficiency in France, Belgium and Switzerland

Education First published its first English Proficiency Index (EPI) report in 2011, based on data collected from over 2 million learners of English as a second language who took free online English tests. The resulting standardized EPI scores (on a scale from 1 to 100) allow comparing one country's English (reading, writing and oral) proficiency to another's.

Education First has published yearly updated reports from 2012 to 2016.

Education First's 2014 report took a closer look at English in France and listed France as the weakest country of the European Union in English proficiency (EPI, 2014). The report additionally stated that the rare education reforms on language instruction in France led to few noticeable results. Although the 2016 English Proficiency Index reported an increase of proficiency in France, it still "lag[ged] behind its European neighbors" (Education First, 2016,

p.19). Ranked 22nd in Europe as of 2016, France scores 54.33 EPI points. It has been claimed in the media (The Local, 2014; Louissi, 2015) that this low level of proficiency is not only a result of poor teaching quality in the public system but mostly a product of attitudes toward the English language, such as the acquisition of other languages being regarded as unnecessary or a desire to protect the French language from Americanization. Although Oakes (2001) found France to indeed be protective of its language, leading to less interest from the general public (and, by extension, from policy makers) in foreign language education (his research compared France to Sweden), there is a lack of academic research on the topic of language attitudes in France.

While ranking 10th among European countries (based on the national average proficiency), Belgium exhibits a substantial regional split in proficiency. Indeed, Belgium's Flemish population scores 68.57 EPI points (comparable to the 4th country worldwide). The French-speaking region, on the other hand, falls behind France with a score of 53.08, a score that can be explained by the Walloon and Brussels EFL curricula detailed in the previous section. Additionally, unlike the general tendency, Belgium's English proficiency score is declining each year (EPI, 2016). A hypothesis explaining this tendency was proposed by Reuchamps (2015) who compared the Belgian situation to the one found in Quebec.

“Language is the fundamental flaw at the core of Belgium's existential crisis, taking on the role that race, religion, or ethnicity play in other conflict-riven societies” (Traynor, 2010), and creates significant tensions between the French-speaking minority and the Flemish-speaking majority, leading as far as the creation of separatist politics. If the current political climate in Belgium affects second language acquisition in a similar way as it does in Quebec (Lambert et al., 1960), the hypothesis is that the national tensions create a desire to protect the French language to the disadvantage of all other languages taught.

Finally, Switzerland ranks 11th European country with an average score of 60.17 EPI points. Although the German-speaking regions show a slightly higher English proficiency, all regions of Switzerland score above 58 EPI points (there is no exact score for French-speaking Switzerland as regions and language borders do not match). One explanation for Switzerland's overall high English proficiency is its multilingualism. Indeed, in a country of under 8.5 million inhabitants with four national languages, the knowledge of two (or more) languages is not only valuable but promoted. According to Grin and Korth (2005), English is replacing German as a lingua franca in both professional and social interactions in Switzerland. In addition, the significant multiculturalism in Switzerland (foreigners living in Switzerland constitute 24% of the total population, 30% of the total population in the city of Geneva) may impact the overall English proficiency. However, there is no existing research looking into Swiss attitudes toward English, neither at a national level nor with focus on a specific region.

In conclusion, statistics indicate that French speakers of Switzerland have higher English proficiency than other European French speakers. Although exhibiting recent improvements, France still lags behind a majority of European countries while having a curriculum close to identical to the Swiss'. Finally, Belgium shows a clear difference between its regions, resulting in an English proficiency level in French-speaking Wallonia lower even than that of France. With the exception of one study comparing French to Swedish attitudes toward English (Oakes, 2001), no research looking into attitudes in French-speaking Switzerland or Belgium has been conducted and no comparisons between French speakers' attitudes in France, Switzerland and Belgium have been drawn.

1.4 Research questions

While France and Switzerland have comparable curricula when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, French speakers of France consistently exhibit a significantly lower

English proficiency than the speakers of the French-speaking region of Switzerland. In French-speaking Belgium, the education system can explain the lower proficiency but does not justify the gradual decline in English proficiency. Based on the results of similar studies, such as the one conducted in Quebec by Lambert et al. (1960), which found negative attitudes to negatively impact the learning of the language, we can hypothesize that proficiency differences in France, Switzerland and Belgium are consistent with a contrast in attitudes.

On these grounds, the research questions for this study are the following:

Main question:

How do attitudes toward the English language compare with English proficiency in France, Switzerland and Belgium?

Sub questions:

1. How do attitudes of French speakers from France, Switzerland and Belgium toward English differ?
2. Does participants' reported English proficiency correspond to the national EPI (2016) findings?
3. Do the attitudes of the participants correlate with their self-assessed English proficiency and the average proficiency reported in the EPI (2016)?

The hypotheses are as follows:

1. Based on stereotypes and media opinions (The Local, 2014; Louissi, 2015), one of the hypotheses is that French speakers in France show more negative attitudes toward English than their Swiss and Belgian counterparts.
2. Additionally, on the basis of the relatively high proficiency results and the researcher's personal experience as a Swiss speaker of French, another hypothesis is that

Swiss-French speakers have the most positive attitudes toward English out of the three examined countries.

3. Finally, the rising tensions between the two main linguistic regions of Belgium may have led to a situation similar to the one found in Quebec (Lambert et al., 1960; Reuchamps, 2015). The hypothesis is that an increasing motivation to protect and promote the French language negatively influences attitudes toward English and explains the decline in English proficiency in French-speaking Belgium. As a result, Belgian speakers of French should have more positive attitudes towards French than toward English.

2. Methodology

2.1 Matched guise technique

Many different data gathering techniques exist to study attitudes (based on the mentalist view). Because of time and resource limitations, it is necessary for this study to use an online data collection method. The attitudinal test method used in this study is the Matched Guise survey method, most commonly used in language attitudes studies. The two fundamental purposes of this technique are (1) to elicit reactions to specific codes (here the French and English languages) by having respondents react to samples of those codes, rather than directly asking them to express their opinions about each code and (2) to make sure the variable tested is the code itself, by controlling all other variables (Gaies & Beebe, 1991).

Developed by Lambert et al. (1960) as part of a study on language attitudes in Canada, the Matched Guise technique requires exposing subjects to recordings of multiple speakers reading the same or a directly translated text in either different languages or different dialects. While respondents are led to believe all recordings belong to different speakers, some individuals indeed are the speaker of only one recording (fillers) and one or multiple speakers are recorded reading in different dialects or languages (matched guises). If different attitudes

emerge toward an identical speaker, the difference in attitudes can then be attributed to the code. Because the evaluated attitudes are, as a result, directed at a sole speaker reading identical text in two different codes, all other variables are controlled by the researcher (Gentry El-Dash & Busnardo, 2001).

2.2 Procedure

The subjects were questioned, in French, about their attitudes through an online questionnaire following the Matched Guise technique. In order to minimize chances of the guises being uncovered, participants were not informed about the true aim of the study (following Lambert et al., 1960) but, instead, were told the study aimed to investigate how speakers' voices influence people's initial judgment of their personality. Moreover, the use of English in addition to French was explained as an effort to broaden the scope of the research.

A total of four recordings were presented to the participants, two in French and two in English. While two of the recordings (one in French, the other in English) belonged to distinct speakers (the fillers), the other two were recorded by a unique speaker reading in both languages (the matched guise). The matched guise speaker was a dual national (France and United States), bilingual male raised in New York while attending a French private school. Both speakers of English communicated in General American English and both speakers of French in a variety free of specific regional/national features. All speakers were millennial males, in order to remove gender attitudes and age association from the variables. All three speakers read a passage taken from the popular book *Le Petit Prince*, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1943), either in the original French or the English translation (see appendix A). The rationale for choosing this text was that it is familiar to most respondents, thus increasing the ease with which respondents could focus on voice and language cues rather than content.

A bipolar rating scale was created using antonymous adjectives (see appendix B). Based on previous studies using a matched-guise technique (Alford & Strothel, 1990; Bayard et al., 2001), both instrumental attitudes (achievement and recognition factors) and integrative attitudes (social factors) were tested by coupling the following traits: very intelligent/not very intelligent; well educated/poorly educated; ambitious/lazy; self-confident/not self-confident; professional/nonprofessional (instrumental traits) and sincere/insincere; friendly/unfriendly; strict/laid-back and warm/cold (integrative traits). The matched recordings were presented first and last in order to reduce the chances of them being recognized as belonging to the same speaker. After listening to each recording participants were asked to rate the speakers on these 9 personality characteristics on a 7-point Likert scale, which was then translated to a score ranging from 1 (the most negative) to 7 (the most positive) for each pair of adjectives. The data was statistically analyzed using a one-way Anova test in order to compare differences in attitudes within regional groups and between regional groups as well as between proficiency levels within each group. The significance threshold was set at $p > .05$.

Finally, the respondents were asked demographic questions, in order to define the survey sample. The demographic questions included age, gender, country of origin, potential countries respondents lived in as well as level of English (none, elementary, intermediate, advanced or fluent).

2.3 Participants

Participants were approached on social media, an efficient platform to remotely reach a dispersed population. Based on the demographics of the respondents, it was decided to focus on Millennials. Although no precise limit exists to delimit this cohort, demographers generally refer to children born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s as Millennials (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Respondents that either did not originate from the studied countries

or did not qualify as Millennials were removed from the analyzed data. The remaining sample consists of 39 French-speaking subjects from France, Switzerland and Belgium (Figure 1).

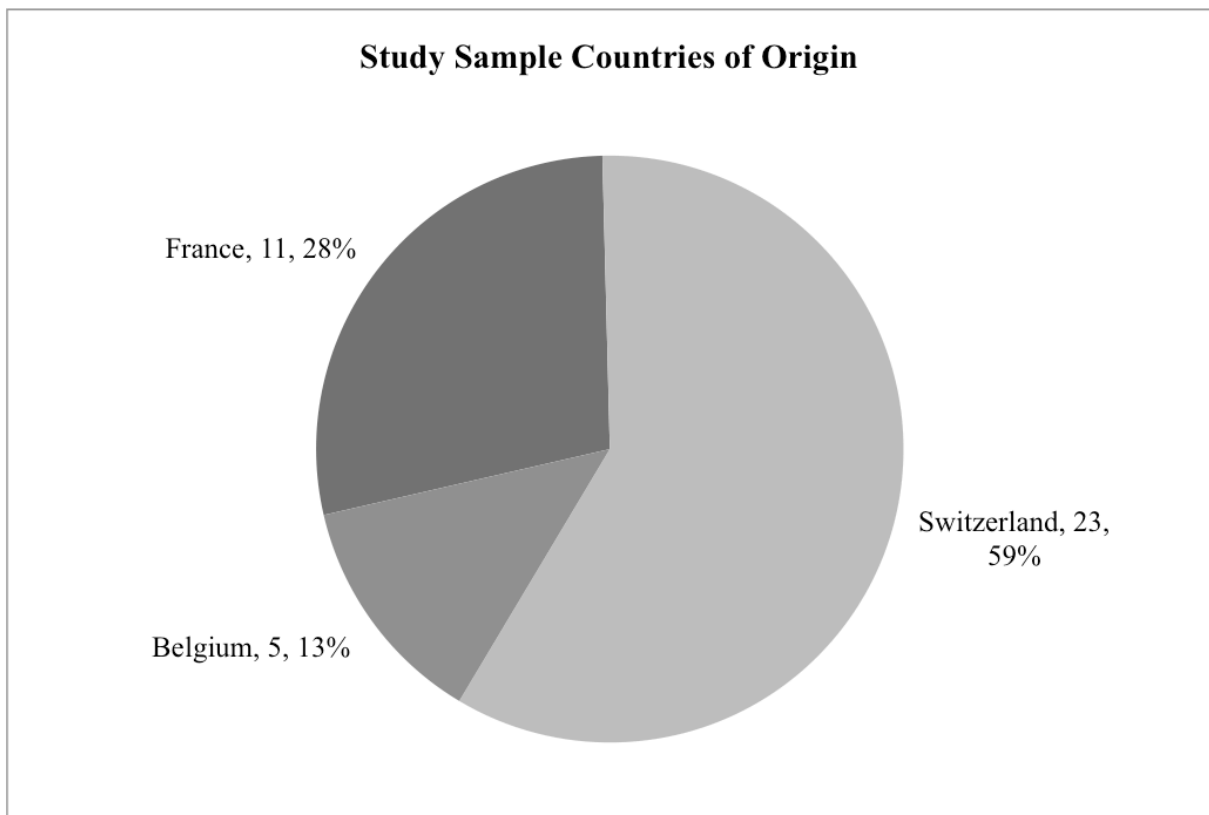


Figure 1: Study sample countries of origins (numbers and percentages)

The sample is made up of 11 French respondents, of which 8 are female and 3 are male. The mean age of the French sample is 23.6 years old (with a standard deviation of 4.7). 23 participants (16 females and 8 males) of this study originate from the French-speaking region of Switzerland. The measured mean age of the Swiss sample is 24.3 years old (with a standard deviation of 2.3). Finally, the Belgian sample is made up of 5 respondents, including 1 female and 4 males. Their mean age is 27.4 (with a standard deviation of 2.5).

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Attitudes

This section reports the mean scores attributed to each guise on the basis of nine personality traits (very intelligent/not very intelligent; well educated/poorly educated; warm/cold; ambitious/lazy; self-confident/not self-confident; professional/nonprofessional; sincere/insincere; friendly/unfriendly; strict/laid-back) and discusses their statistical significance. The higher the score (the highest being 7), the more intelligent, educated, warm, ambitious, self-confident, professional, sincere, friendly or laid-back each guise was judged to be by the participants. In order to compare the reported attitudes, the data set has been split based on the country each participant originated from; France, Switzerland or Belgium.

3.1.1 French speakers of France

The French respondents in this study evaluated the French spoken and English spoken guises rather similarly (Figure 2). French respondents found the English guise to sound slightly more intelligent, educated, ambitious, self-confident and laid-back on average than its French equivalent. The French guise, on the other hand, was generally perceived as more sincere, warm and friendly. French respondents judged the French and English guises as equally professional.

However, while a comparison of means shows slight differences between the two guises, these differences are too minimal or the variations within the sample too substantial for any attitude difference to be statistically significant. Looking at the means, there initially seems to be a distinct difference between the two languages on self-confidence, yet statistical tests (Anova) show the difference fails to be statistically significant with a p-value of .087 (table 3). The differences in attitudes reported by the French sample are not statistically significant on any of the nine traits as p-values range from $p = .087$ on self-confidence to

$p = 1$ on professionalism. As a result, the null hypothesis (French speakers of English have the same attitudes toward the French and English languages) cannot be rejected.

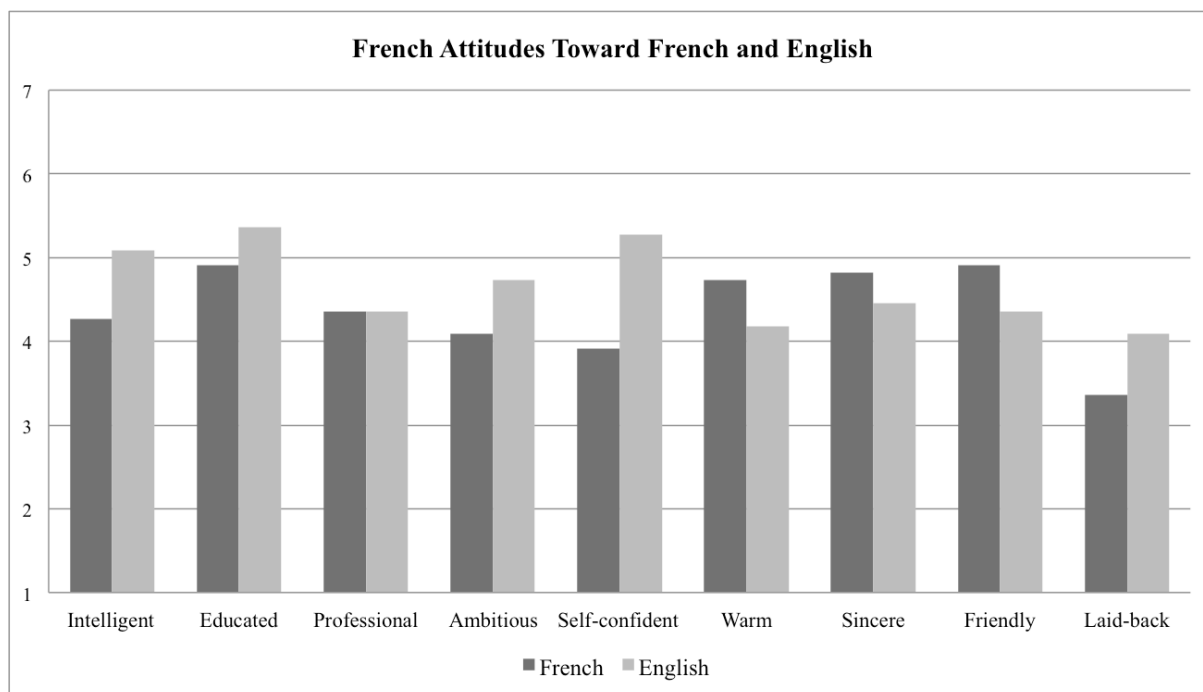


Figure 2: French Attitudes Toward French and English on a 7-point Likert Scale

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the French sample per language and trait

	French		English		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Intelligent	4.27	1.27	5.09	1.45	.174
Educated	4.91	1.45	5.36	0.80	.374
Professional	4.36	1.36	4.36	1.50	1.000
Ambitious	4.09	1.58	4.73	1.28	.310
Self-confident	3.91	2.02	5.27	1.49	.087
Warm	4.73	1.91	4.18	1.78	.408
Sincere	4.82	1.72	4.36	1.21	.482
Friendly	4.91	1.45	4.36	1.36	.373
Laid-back	4.36	2.01	4.09	2.02	.755

As a result, an analysis of scores granted to each guise by the French respondents showed that they did not significantly prefer either language on any trait, whether instrumental or integrative. In addition, means (generally around 4, the middle point of the scale) indicate that attitudes toward both languages are rather neutral.

3.1.2 French speakers of Switzerland

French speakers of Switzerland demonstrated clearly different attitudes toward the French and English guises. As reported in table 4 and illustrated in figure 3, the English guise scored significantly higher on all instrumental traits: intelligence, education, ambition, self-confidence and professionalism. The most striking difference is in the scores Swiss respondents granted each guise on self-confidence; the French guise was rated 3.61 while the English guise scored 5.78. However, while English scored noticeably higher on all instrumental traits, it scored lower than French on most integrative traits and was, on average, seen as less sincere, laid-back and friendly. The exception to this instrumental-integrative divide is warmth, for which English scored higher than French.

The differences in scores given the French and English guises by the Swiss respondents are highly statistically significant for all instrumental traits, with p-levels ranging from $p = .007$ for intelligence to $p < .001$ for ambition and self-confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis (Swiss speakers of French have the same attitudes toward the French and English language) can be rejected on the basis of significant differences in instrumental motivations. By contrast, all differences based on integrative traits (sincerity, friendliness, laid-backness as well as warmth) resulted in p-levels greater than .05, varying between $p = .167$ (on sincerity) and $p = .873$ (on friendliness). As such, the differences in attitudes based on integrative measures are statistically insignificant.

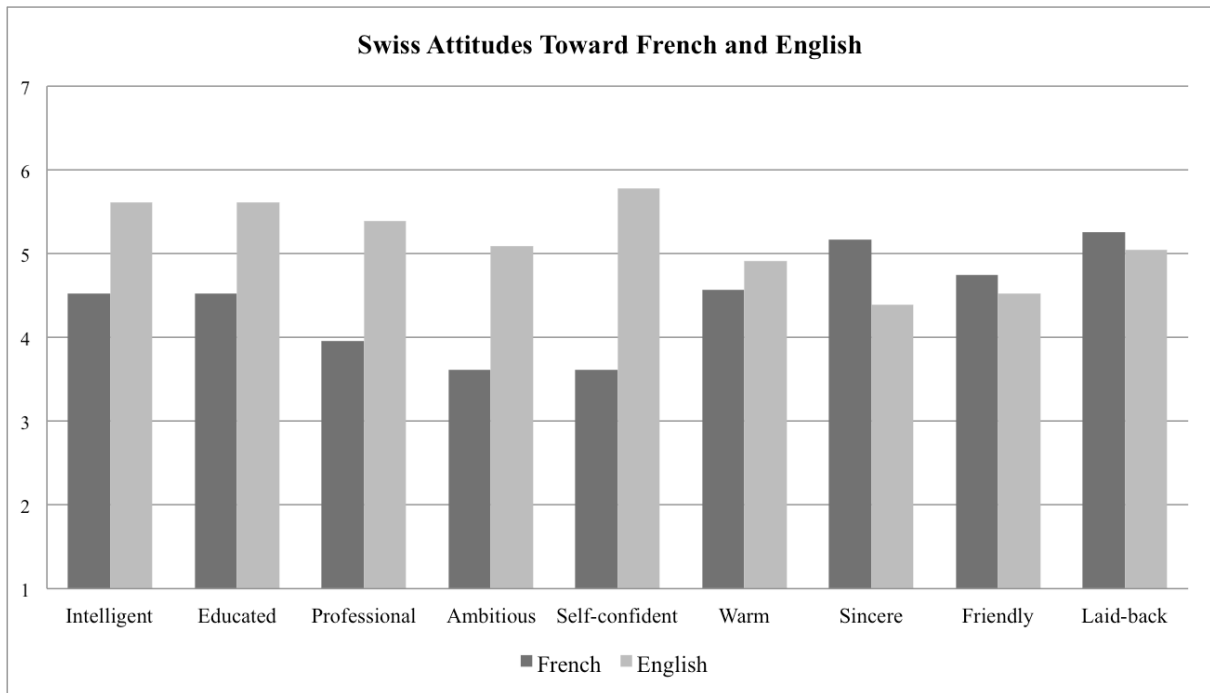


Figure 3: Swiss Attitudes Toward French and English on a 7-point Likert Scale

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Swiss sample per language and trait

	French		English		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Intelligent	4.52	1.41	5.61	1.16	.007
Educated	4.52	1.38	5.61	0.84	.002
Professional	3.96	1.43	5.39	1.50	.002
Ambitious	3.61	1.16	5.09	1.28	<.001
Self-confident	3.61	1.56	5.78	1.24	<.001
Warm	4.57	1.34	4.91	1.56	.423
Sincere	5.17	1.67	4.52	1.47	.167
Friendly	4.74	1.86	4.61	1.78	.809
Laid-back	5.26	1.21	5.04	1.78	.630

To summarize, the data extracted from the Swiss group showed that this section of the respondents had significantly more positive attitudes toward English based on instrumental traits. They did not, however, prefer either the French or the English guise based on integrative motivations.

3.1.3 French speakers of Belgium

French speakers of Belgium exhibited strikingly different attitudes toward the French and English guises. As can be observed in figure 4, the English guise scored higher on average on all instrumental traits: intelligence, education, ambition, self-confidence and professionalism. By contrast, and to a lesser extent, Belgian respondents preferred the French guise on all integrative traits: warmth, sincerity, friendliness and laid-backness. When looking at mean scores, the Belgian sample shows a clear split in attitudes along instrumental and integrative lines.

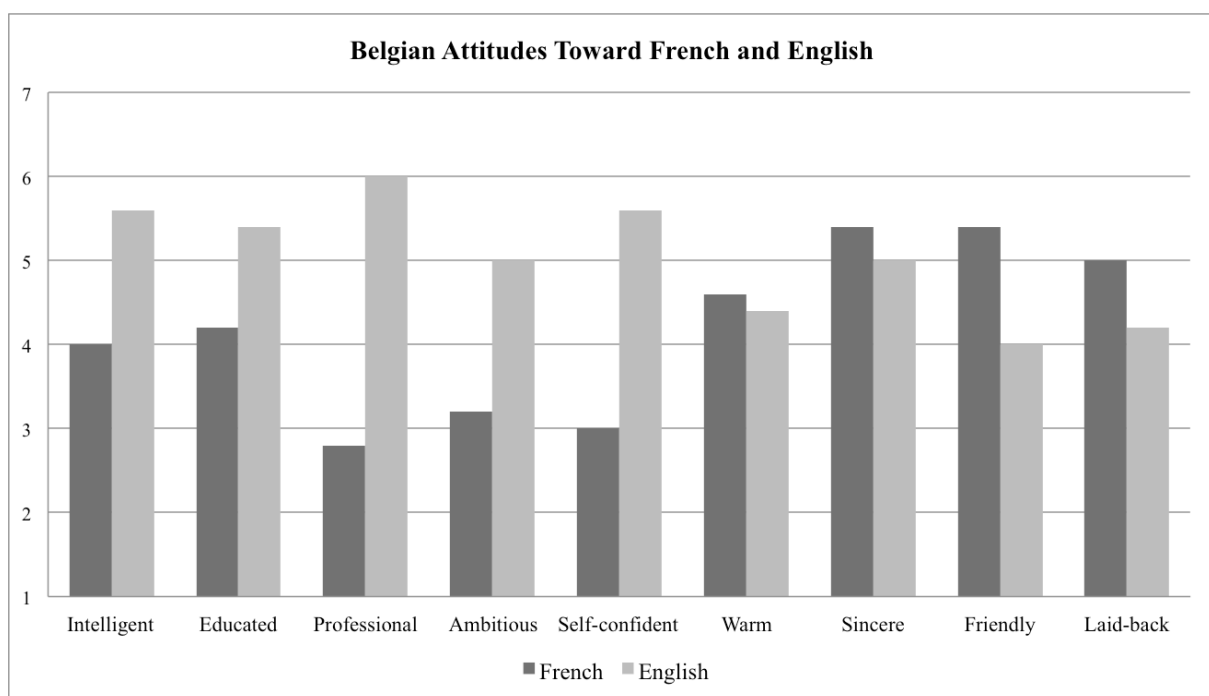


Figure 4: Belgian Attitudes Toward French and English on a 7-point Likert scale

However, due to the limited size of this sample, most differences are statistically insignificant (see p-levels in table 5). Indeed, only three traits (professionalism, ambition and self-confidence) show statistically significant differences with p-levels ranging from $p = .04$ (for ambition) to $p < .001$ (for self-confidence). All other differences, whether instrumental or integrative in nature, reveal p-levels too great ($p > .05$) to reject their respective null hypotheses.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Belgian sample per language and trait

	French		English		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Intelligent	4.00	1.87	5.60	1.14	.141
Educated	4.20	0.45	5.40	1.14	.060
Professional	2.80	1.10	6.00	0.71	.001
Ambitious	3.20	1.10	5.00	1.23	.040
Self-confident	3.00	0.71	5.60	1.52	.008
Warm	4.60	1.82	4.40	1.82	.866
Sincere	5.40	1.34	5.00	1.00	.608
Friendly	5.40	1.89	4.00	1.23	.073
Laid-back	5.00	2.00	4.20	0.45	.408

As a result, the data extracted from the Belgian group showed that this section of the respondents had significantly more positive attitudes toward English on 3 out of 5 instrumental traits (professionalism, ambition and self-confidence). They did not, however, significantly prefer either the French or the English guise on intelligence and education or on any integrative traits. Furthermore, although the means show a trend similar to the one

observable in the Swiss sample (distinct differences on instrumental traits in favor of English and minor differences on integrative traits in favor of French) the Belgian sample size requires a cautious reading and the results should not be generalized to a broader population.

3.1.4 Comparison of attitudes

Results of the survey showed that no group (French, Swiss nor Belgian) expressed more positive attitudes toward French than English. In addition, none of the three groups scored either guise significantly differently on integrative traits (sincere, friendly, laid-back or warm). When looking at instrumental traits (intelligent, educated, ambitious, self-confident and professional) on the other hand, attitudes differ.

Confirming the original hypothesis, Swiss respondents exhibited the most positive attitudes toward English out of all three surveyed countries, with statistically significant differences on all instrumental traits scores in favor of English. Similarly, the hypothesis according to which French respondents would show more negative attitudes than their French-speaking neighbors is corroborated by the results. Indeed, while the attitudes they revealed toward the English guise were not negative, as expected based on hypotheses from Louissi (2015), Oakes (2001) and The Local (2014), but rather neutral, and while they were not significantly different from their attitudes toward the French guise, French respondents were the only sample group not to score English significantly higher on any instrumental traits. The hypothesis concerning Belgian attitudes was, however, not verified by the results of this study. While the hypothesis stated that French speakers from Belgium would score French higher than English, Belgian respondents of this study scored English significantly higher than French on three instrumental traits (ambition, self-confidence and professionalism), granting the French guise below average scores. These results, however, have to be interpreted with caution, as a sample of 5 participants does not accurately represent the studied population.

The statistical analysis of the differences in means between national groups showed that attitudes in France, Switzerland and Belgium are only significantly different on instrumental traits (table 6). Anova tests between group means on instrumental traits (table 7) shows that the differences are not equally significant between the three groups. Instrumental attitudes toward the French language were only significantly different between the French group and the Belgian group ($p = .029$), the latter of which exhibited significantly more negative attitudes, while Swiss respondents did not score the French guise significantly differently from either French or Belgian respondents. Instrumental attitudes toward the English language, on the other hand, were only significantly different between France and Switzerland ($p = .041$). French respondents scored the English recording significantly lower than the Swiss group and lower than the Belgium group with a significance value of $p = .053$. The Swiss and Belgian groups showed no significant differences ($p = .908$). We can therefore conclude that respondents exhibited some significantly different attitudes toward French and English based on their country of origin; France, Belgium or Switzerland.

Table 6: Significance of mean score differences between France, Switzerland and Belgium

	French	English
Instrumental traits	$p = .046$	$p = .047$
Integrative traits	$p = .275$	$p = .086$

Table 7: Significance of mean instrumental score differences between paired groups

	French	English
France / Switzerland	$p = .349$	$p = .041$
France / Belgium	$p = .029$	$p = .053$
Belgium / Switzerland	$p = .119$	$p = .908$

3.2 English Proficiency

3.2.1 Sample's self-reported English proficiency

This section reports the self-assessed English proficiency of all respondents as well as their associated relevant demographics. Survey participants were asked to assess their English proficiency as 'non-existent', 'elementary', 'intermediate', 'advanced' or 'fluent' (table 8). In addition, they were asked to indicate whether they had previously lived in a foreign country (table 9).

Table 8: Participants' self-reported English proficiency

	None	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent
France	-	-	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%
Switzerland	-	8.7%	30.3%	39.1%	21.7%
Belgium	-	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	-
Total	-	7.7%	30.8%	43.6%	17.9%

Table 9: Participants having lived in non-French-speaking countries

		France	Switzerland	Belgium
Lived in an English-speaking country	Ratio	2/11	8/23	2/5
	Percentage of group	18.2%	34.7%	40.0%
Lived in other non-French-speaking country	Ratio	2/11	2/23	1/5
	Percentage of group	18.2%	8.7%	20.0%
	Cumulative percentage of group	29.4%	43.4%	60.0%

Out of 11 participants, 4 subjects of the French sample evaluated their English proficiency as intermediate, 5 as advanced and 2 estimated their level of English to be fluent. The two participants with fluent proficiency reported having lived abroad, more specifically in the United States and in the United Kingdom.

2 out of 23 participants of the Swiss sample evaluated their English proficiency as being elementary, 7 as intermediate, 9 as advanced and 5 as fluent. 4 out of the 5 fluent respondents reported having previously lived in an English-speaking country (India, Canada or the United Kingdom). 3 respondents who assessed their proficiency as advanced lived in English-speaking countries (U.K. or Australia).

1 out of 5 Belgian respondents assessed their proficiency as elementary, 1 as intermediate, the remaining 3 as advanced. None of the Belgian participants reported having a fluent level of English. The participant with intermediate proficiency as well as one of the 3 advanced participants reportedly had previously lived in the United Kingdom.

Due to the size of the Belgian sample, a comparison between Belgian respondents' proficiency and their Swiss and French counterpart leads to few significant conclusions. On the other hand, the French and Swiss respondents' proficiency results are comparable. A majority of respondents, with little distinction based on their country of origin, reported having an advanced proficiency and all but one fluent respondent had previously lived in English-speaking countries.

3.2.2 Sample's English proficiency and EPI (2016) findings

Due to the lack of access to participants' EPI scores and the fact that it has to rely solely on self-reported proficiency labeled 'non-existent', 'elementary', 'intermediate', 'advanced' or 'bilingual', this study cannot accurately compare participants' proficiency to the EPI scores. However, the results of the proficiency question allow the researcher to notice differences in proficiency between countries and whether these differences match the ones found in the EPI

(2016). Provided their self-assessment was accurate, the survey samples' English proficiencies do not reflect the proficiency differences of their populations. Indeed, while the EPI (2016) ranked Swiss speakers of French significantly higher in proficiency than the French and Belgian (both found amongst the lowest-ranked European countries in the index), French and Swiss respondents' proficiency levels do not show such a difference. We will not discuss Belgian results as the sample is too small and all but two respondents had lived in English-speaking countries, leading to proficiency results too insignificant to be generalized to a larger population.

The English proficiency reported by French and Swiss respondents was, if not identical, surprisingly comparable. In both samples, a neat majority of respondents assessed their English proficiency as 'advanced', followed by 'intermediate', 'fluent' and last, 'elementary' for two Swiss respondents (table 6). While these results were expected from Swiss participants based on their high EPI (2016) scores, they are unexpectedly high for French participants.

A factor that could have influenced the sample groups' reported proficiency is the proportion to have lived in non-French-speaking countries, and particularly English-speaking countries. 43.4% of Swiss respondents and 29.4% of the French participants had been immersed in cultures speaking foreign languages. Most of these respondents had not only lived abroad but lived in English-speaking countries (respectively 34.7% and 18.2%). In addition, while some had lived in countries speaking a language different from French or English (43.4% and 18.2%), the wide use of English as a lingua franca around the world may also have influenced the proficiency of our travelling respondents. Having lived abroad is then a factor that could explain a higher proficiency, although based on the difference in percentage we would then still expect the French group to have a lower proficiency than the Swiss group.

Another possible hypothesis that can be suggested based on these results is that French speakers from France assess their proficiency differently than those from Switzerland. Indeed, the self-assessment of proficiency based on subjective labels might have resulted in some respondents overrating or underrating their proficiency. If the tendency is to assess one's proficiency by comparing it to the proficiency of their environment, then a French and a Swiss respondent with the same objective proficiency could have, for example, self-assessed themselves as having respectively an advanced and an intermediate English level. As a result, it is possible that using a subjective self-assessment method rather than an objective method such as the EPI scores led to French and Swiss respondents assessing their proficiency similarly while having different levels.

3.3 Relationship between proficiency and attitudes

Differences in results between Swiss and French attitudes toward English match the difference in proficiency reported in the EPI (Education First, 2016). Indeed, Switzerland ranks higher than France on English proficiency and Swiss respondents exhibited statistically significantly more positive attitudes toward English than the French respondents did. However, French attitudes did not correspond to the self-reported proficiency of our sample. Inversely, our Belgian sample's attitudes toward English did not correlate with the expected results (namely higher scores for the French guise than the English guise), yet matched their reported proficiency.

Based on the EPI (Education First, 2016) results and existing theory on attitudes and proficiency (Baker, 1992; Dörnyei, 2003; Gaies & Beebe, 1991; Zhao, 2015), the Swiss sample was expected to show the highest proficiency and the most positive attitude toward English. With statistically significantly more positive scores in favor of the English guise on all instrumental traits and high self-assessed proficiency, the results of French speakers of Switzerland correlate with the hypotheses. Interestingly, however, the attitudes of Swiss

respondents were not influenced by proficiency. All 24 respondents scored English higher than French on instrumental traits. Similarly, no proficiency group exhibited significantly different attitudes on integrative traits. As a result, it seems Swiss speakers of French have positive instrumental attitudes toward English no matter their English proficiency.

The French sample did not exhibit attitudes that fully matched the ones forecasted based either on the EPI results or the sample proficiency. Indeed, with a low average EPI score for European standards, French respondents were expected to exhibit negative attitudes toward English. However, while the results showed that the French sample had the least positive attitudes, they were not negative in value. Furthermore, the resulting attitudes were not consistent with the proficiency of the sample, as French participants reported proficiency levels similar to their Swiss counterparts yet much less positive attitudes. More surprisingly, while French respondents with average or advanced proficiency levels did not statistically significantly prefer either guise, all respondents with a self-assessed fluent level of English scored the French guise higher on both instrumental and integrative traits. These findings go against the language attitudes theories (Baker, 1992; Dörnyei, 2003; Gaies & Beebe, 1991; Zhao, 2015) that expect more proficient speakers to have more positive attitudes. The results, on the other hand, do not invalidate Oakes' (2011) conclusion and The Local (2014) and Louissi's (2015) hypothesis according to which French people feel a need to protect the French language against globalization (and more specifically Americanization).

Finally, the Belgian sample's attitudes did not correlate with the EPI (2016) results. With statistically significantly more positive scores ascribed to the English guise on three instrumental traits, the Belgian attitudes did not match the low average proficiency (lower than France) of the French-speaking part of Belgium. However, the Belgian sample self-assessed itself as generally advanced in its knowledge of the English language. Based on the attitudes-proficiency theories, it is likely that their attitudes were positively influenced by

their proficiency as well as by a majority of them having lived in non-French-speaking countries.

As a result, while most respondents' attitudes reflect the overall country EPI scores, their self-assessed proficiencies do not align. Indeed, Swiss respondents exhibited positive attitudes toward English regardless of their proficiency, while French respondents with higher proficiency levels preferred the French guise and all other respondents showed no significant differences in attitudes. Ultimately, this might suggest that proficiency does not directly correlate with attitudes but is rather only one factor interacting with pre-existing cultural attitudes.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary of findings

None of the three countries surveyed, France, Belgium and Switzerland, exhibited differences in integrative attitudes between the French and the English recording. Instrumental attitudes, however, varied from one nationality to the other.

The Swiss sample of this study showed the most notably positive attitudes toward the English language. Indeed, this group is the only one that showed statistically significantly more positive attitudes toward the English guise on all instrumental traits, especially on self-confidence. With predominantly advanced English proficiency levels, the Swiss group's results correlate with the EPI proficiency ranking and match the hypothesized attitudes toward the English language. However, individual proficiency levels did not affect attitudes in this group. All respondents scored English higher than French on instrumental traits and there was no significant difference between proficiency groups on either instrumental or integrative measures.

The Belgian sample's recorded attitudes did not meet the hypothesis according to which they would show more positive attitudes toward French, a hypothesis that cannot, however, be rejected because of the small sample size. Belgian respondents scored the English guise significantly higher than the French guise on three instrumental traits (professionalism, ambition and self-confidence). This group showed no significant preference for the French recording on any trait, and scored the France guise significantly lower than the French respondents on instrumental traits. In addition to not expressing the expected attitudes toward French and English, Belgian respondents were overall more proficient than the EPI (2016) average in French-speaking Belgium.

French respondents of this study did not exhibit significantly different attitudes toward the French or English guises. Although existing literature suggests French attitudes should have been more negative toward English than toward French, French respondents did not prefer one guise over the other. However, the results of the French group matched the hypothesis by scoring the English guise the most negatively out of the three surveyed groups, with a statistically significant difference. In addition, French respondents assessed their English proficiency as being much higher than their country average (EPI, 2016). However, the self-assessment method does not allow us to determine whether respondents were objectively more proficient or if this group over-estimated their proficiency levels. As a result, although the French attitudes collected in this study match the researcher's hypothesis (by having the most negative attitudes of the three groups), they fail to meet the assumptions based on literature, stereotypes and theories on the proficiency-attitudes relationship.

To conclude, this study demonstrates that French speakers of Switzerland have significantly more positive instrumental attitudes toward the English language than French speakers of French, with little regard to their individual proficiency levels. This study does

not, however, successfully place French-speaking Belgium on the attitudinal map, nor does it succeed in linking attitudes to individual proficiency.

4.2 Limitations and further research

A few limitations of this study ought to be addressed. To start with, the distribution of respondents per country is unequal. As a result, Switzerland is overrepresented in this sample, while the Belgian sample is too limited to draw significant conclusions. Secondly, respondents' self-reported proficiency was higher overall than their respective country average, and a majority of respondents had previously lived abroad. For a better representation of the population of interest, further research using a sample larger in size and more representative of the population in English proficiency is necessary. Alternatively, it would be beneficial to investigate different age groups separately in order to uncover whether different generations in each country exhibit significantly different attitudes toward the English language.

In addition, we need to keep in mind the possible effects the specific questionnaire set-up may have had on the retrieved attitudes. Indeed, it is conceivable that, although discarded in the results analysis, the filler speakers (recordings 2 and 3) influenced the respondents' judgment of our matched guise. More specifically, while the first recording was evaluated without any basis for comparison, the fourth recording was preceded by the filler recordings and possibly evaluated accordingly. Further research using a higher number of guises and a varying sequence (as used by Gentry El-Dash & Busnardo, 2001; Lambert, 1960; Sicam & Lucas, 2016) would increase the validity of results.

Finally, it is important to stress the subjectivity of the reported data, as there is no universal and objective scale for attitudes. In addition, proficiency assessments in this study were subjective rather than following a more objective method such as EPI scores. A similar study using an objective measurement of proficiency would be of interest to more draw more

accurate connections between attitudes and proficiency. Indeed, subjective measures leave room for over- and underrated proficiency assessments. Using a scale such as Education First's score system would allow not only adequate comparison of subjects but also comparing them to a global databank. Alternatively, the results of this study raised the question of not only individual over- or underrated proficiency assessment but also potential group-wide differences in self-assessment. Research comparing objective scores with self-assessed proficiency could uncover whether different regional groups assess their proficiency differently and whether these differences correlate with the objective proficiency of the region.

Ultimately, while this study successfully found significant differences in attitudes toward English in different French-speaking regions, it also raised a series of new questions. Are attitudes in the surveyed regions dissimilar in different age groups? Is language proficiency rooted in individual attitudes or rather in culturally shared attitudes? Do speakers from different regions self-assess their proficiency differently? This study certainly opened avenues for additional research.

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6. Appendices

A. Matched Guise Recorded Text

French text in *Le Petit Prince*, Chapter 7 (Saint-Exupéry, 1943):

Il y a des millions d'années que les fleurs fabriquent des épines. Il y a des millions d'années que les moutons mangent quand même les fleurs. Et ce n'est pas sérieux de chercher à comprendre pourquoi elles se donnent tant de mal pour se fabriquer des épines qui ne servent jamais à rien? Ce n'est pas important la guerre des moutons et des fleurs? Ce n'est pas plus sérieux et plus important que les additions d'un gros Monsieur rouge? Et si je connais, moi, une fleur unique au monde, qui n'existe nulle part, sauf dans ma planète, et qu'un petit mouton peut anéantir d'un seul coup, comme ça, un matin, sans se rendre compte de ce qu'il fait, ce n'est pas important ça?

English text in *Le Petit Prince*, Chapter 7 (Saint-Exupéry, 1943):

For millions of years flowers have been producing thorns. For millions of years sheep have been eating them all the same. And it's not serious, trying to understand why flowers go to such trouble to produce thorns that are good for nothing? It's not important, the war between the sheep and the flowers? It's no more serious and more important than the numbers that fat red gentleman is adding up? Suppose I happen to know a unique flower, one that exists nowhere in the world except on my planet, one that a little sheep can wipe out in a single bite one morning, just like that, without even realizing what he's doing, that isn't important?

B. Questionnaire

Welcome Screen

Welcome screen text (French translation in figure 5): This survey is part of an exploratory study on the role of voice on people's initial judgment of personality. You will hear four speakers read a passage of The Little Prince. After listening to each recording, you will be asked to assess the speaker on 10 personality traits. Please answer based on your initial impression, there is no right or wrong. Note that some speakers speak in French while some others speak in English, to expand the scope of this study. At the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked to fill in basic demographic questions.



The image shows a screenshot of a questionnaire welcome screen. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the text "Voix et premières impressions" in white. Below the header, there are two links: "Charger un questionnaire non terminé" and "Sortir et effacer vos réponses". The main content area has a light gray background and features the title "Voix et premières impressions" in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below the title, there is a subtitle "Questionnaire d'exploration de l'effet de la voix sur l'évaluation initiale de personnalité" in a smaller, blue font. The main text is in French and explains the purpose of the survey, the number of speakers, and the nature of the questions. It also includes a thank you message and a note about the number of questions. At the bottom right, there is a dark blue button with the text "Suivant" in white.

Voix et premières impressions

Charger un questionnaire non terminé Sortir et effacer vos réponses

Voix et premières impressions

Questionnaire d'exploration de l'effet de la voix sur l'évaluation initiale de personnalité

Vous allez entendre quatre individus lire un passage du Petit Prince. Après l'écoute de chaque enregistrement, il vous sera demandé d'évaluer l'orateur sur la base de 10 traits de personnalité. **Dans la mesure du possible, évitez les jugements neutres et répondez en fonction de votre première impression.** Il n'y a pas de bonnes ou mauvaises réponses.

Notez que certains orateurs parlent français et d'autres anglais, afin d'étendre la portée de la recherche. Le contenu du texte lu n'a cependant pas d'impact dans cette étude.

A la fin du questionnaire, il vous sera demandé de remplir quelques questions démographiques.

Merci d'avance pour votre participation!

Il y a 9 questions dans ce questionnaire.

Suivant

Figure 5: Questionnaire Welcome Screen

Attitudes Question

Recording assessment question (French translation in figure 6): Listen to the following recording and assess the speaker. Instinctively, the individual seems: very intelligent/not very intelligent; well educated/poorly educated; warm/cold; ambitious/lazy; self-confident/not self-confident; professional/nonprofessional; sincere/insincere; friendly/unfriendly; strict/laid-back.

Individu 1

Ecoutez l'enregistrement suivant et évaluez le locuteur.

✳ Instinctivement, l'individu vous semble:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Peu intelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Intelligent
Peu instruit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Hautement instruit
Froid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chaleureux
Peu ambitieux	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ambitieux
Peu sûr de soi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sûr de soi
Peu professionnel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Professionnel
Hypocrite	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sincère
Antipathique	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Amical
Strict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Décontracté

Figure 6: Questionnaire Recording Assessment Screen

Demographics Questions

The questionnaire demographic questions (French translation in figure 7):

What is your sex? (Possible answers: female, male or no response)

What is your age? (Open answer field)

What is your country of origin? (Possible answers: France, Switzerland, Belgium or other)

Have you previously lived in another country? If yes, which one? (Possible answers: No, yes.

If yes, open answer field)

What level of English do you consider having? (Possible answers: none, elementary, intermediate, advanced or fluent)

Démographie

Avant de terminer ce questionnaire, merci de bien vouloir répondre à ces quelques questions démographiques.

Quel est votre sexe?

Féminin Masculin Sans réponse

* Quel est votre âge?

ⓘ Votre réponse doit être comprise entre 10 et 100
ⓘ Seul un nombre entier peut être inscrit dans ce champ.

* Dans quel pays avez vous grandi?

ⓘ Veuillez sélectionner une réponse maximum

France
 Suisse
 Belgique
 Autre :

Avez-vous vécu dans d'autres pays?
Si oui, lesquels?

ⓘ Veuillez sélectionner une réponse maximum

Non
 Oui

Quel niveau d'anglais considérez-vous avoir?

Aucune connaissances
 Niveau élémentaire
 Niveau intermédiaire
 Niveau avancé
 Niveau bilingue
 Sans réponse

Figure 7: Questionnaire Demographics Screen