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# Linguistic Risk-Taking: A New Pedagogical and Technological Tool to Support Language Learning

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# Overview

**Part I:** Context, Conceptualization and Implementation of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative at the University of Ottawa

**Part II:** Research Perspectives on Linguistic Risk-Taking

**Part III:** Demo of the Linguistic Risk-Taking App (Beta)

**Part IV:** Questions and Discussion



# Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative: The Team

**A team of enthusiastic professors,  
students and staff members**

**Professors:**

Nikolay Slavkov (PI)  
Laura Ambrosio  
Jérémy Séror  
Martine Rhéaume  
Monika Jezak  
Parvin Movassat



**Students:**

Ed Griffiths (Bilingualism Studies)  
Stephanie Marshall (Bilingualism Studies)  
Gurpreet Kaur Saran (Engineering)  
Manon Fleurus (Communications)  
Francesco MacAllister-Caruso (Communications)

**Staff Members:**

Mélanie Cossette,  
Rnée Bélec  
(Communications)  
Naïma Messadh-Imgaline  
(Web Development)



# Setting the scene...

## Some conceptual frameworks

- Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Lantolf & Thorne 2006, among others)
- (Second) Language Socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 2011; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Duff, 2007)
- Interdependence (Cummins 1979, 1981, 2007, 2017)
- Multi-competence (Cook 1991, 1992, 2009, 2013)
- Plurilingualism (Coste, Moore, & Zarate 1997, 2009; Coste & Simon 2009; Canagarajah 2007, 2009; Dagenais & Moore 2008; Marshall & Moore 2013; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013)





# Setting the scene...

## Some conceptual frameworks

- Dynamic Systems Theory and Complexity Theory in SLA and Applied Linguistics (De Bot et al. 2007; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008, MacIntyre et al. 2017).
- Dominant Language Constellations (Aronin 2006, 2016)
- Superdiversity (Blommaert, J. and Rampton, 2011, Vertovec 2007; a.o.).
- Translanguaging (Garcia, 2009; García et al. 2017; Williams, 1994; 2002)
- Multilingualism & Social Justice (Ortega, 2016, 2017)



# Paradigm Shifts in Language Education: Towards Multiliterate & Plurilingual Agencies



Move away from:

- native-speaking (monolingual) norms as targets or values for language teaching and learning
- notions of equal proficiency in all languages in bi/multilingual contexts
- strict separation of languages in language teaching, learning and use
- focusing only on 'big' standardized, highly prestigious languages and varieties and ignoring 'small' vernacular languages and varieties
- discouraging (migrant) children, adolescents and adults from using their home/minority languages at school and in society in general





# The University of Ottawa Context: Official Bilingualism



## Opportunities

- World's largest bilingual (English-French) university.
- Many courses and programs offered in English or French or in both languages.
- World's first/largest French immersion undergraduate program.
- Bilingual campus services.

and



Bilingual University  
**does NOT mean that**  
everybody is bilingual

## Challenges

- Easy to remain within one's linguistic comfort zone
- Easy to default to the preferred language (usually the stronger language)
- Language rights/expectations: request information, documents, and services in the official language of your choice.





# Innate challenges of language learning: taking linguistic risks



An authentic, everyday communication task that language learners may shy away from due to various “risk factors” involved:

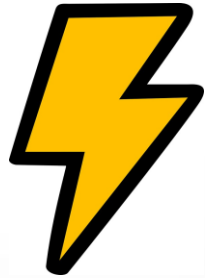


- being misunderstood
- misunderstanding others
- making errors
- changing existing language habits (socialization)
- taking on a different identity
- being judged



# Innate challenges of language learning: taking linguistic risks

An authentic, everyday communication task that learners may shy away from due to various "risks" involved:



- being misunderstood
- misunderstanding others
- making errors
- changing existing language habits (socialization)
- taking on a different identity
- being judged, criticized or corrected

**Vous n'avez pas fait  
le bon accord avec le  
sujet de la phrase!!!!**



# More Theoretical Constructs

- **Language ego**, lowering inhibitions (Guiora et al., 1972; 1980). Alcohol and Diazepam Studies, Defense Language Institute (US Defense Department).
- **Motivation** (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner, 1985, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels et al. 2000; Dörnyei 2005, 2009; Dörnyei et al., 2016; among others).
- **Willingness to Communicate** (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, et Noels (1998; 2011): “state of readiness to engage in the L2, the culmination of processes that prepare the learner to initiate L2 communication with a specific person at a specific time”.
- **Language Anxiety** (Gkonou, Daubney, Dewaele, 2017; Horwitz, 1986, 2017; Dewaele, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017; Scovel, 1987, among many others): most widely studied emotion in second language acquisition; approximately four decades of research (MacIntyre, 2017).
- **Linguistic Risk-Taking** (Beebe, 1983; Cervantes, 2013; Dehbozorgi, 2012; Dewaele, 2012)

Drawing inspiration from the above literature...  
→ Linguistic Risk-Taking



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# Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport

- Distributed in selected OLBI language classes (French and English version available).
- Students “check off” linguistic risks that are relevant to them.
- Students can pick and choose their risks.
- After a certain number of risks have been taken, the passport may be submitted to enter a draw for prizes.



PASSPORT  
PASSEPORT

Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute  
Institut des langues officielles et du bilinguisme



# Rationale and Rules of engagement

Explanations of the rationale behind the Initiative and the rules for participation:

- What is a linguistic risk?
- Why is it important to take risks?
- How do I participate in the Initiative?
- When can I submit my passport to the draw for prizes?



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## WHY LINGUISTIC RISK-TAKING?

A linguistic risk is an authentic, every-day communication task that some language learners may shy away from and may need special encouragement to engage in. Research has shown that some learners hesitate to take risks and do not always benefit from

## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

It's simple and it's fun:

- Take as many risks as possible from the list included in this passport.
- Give yourself a check mark for each risk taken:
  - ◇ **Most risks can be repeated up to three times (see number of checkboxes by each risk);**
  - ◇ **Risks can be taken in any order you like;**
  - ◇ **You do not need to undertake all risks listed;**
  - ◇ **Each time you undertake a risk, indicate whether you thought the level of risk was High, Medium, or Low by adding the corresponding letter (H, M, or L) beside the checkbox.**
- Feel free to use the blank passport pages provided at the back to propose additional risks.
- Tally the risks you have taken. After completing at least 20 risks (including repeated ones), submit the passport to your language teacher or to the OLBI reception desk (MHN 130) to enter a draw for prizes.
- Submissions for the draw will be accepted from October 30, 2017 until November 17, 2017.
- If you win a prize, you will receive it in your language class or you will be notified by email.



# Examples of risks

- Over 70 risks included.
- Most risks can be repeated up to three times (= about 200 opportunities for authentic practice).
- Students rate each risk as High (**H**), Medium (**M**), or Low (**L**).

8. Je me suis inscrit•e à un atelier de conversation en français au Centre de ressources Julien-Couture.  **M**  
 **L**  
 .....
9. J'ai écrit un CV ou une lettre de motivation en français.  **H**  
 .....
10. Je me suis inscrit•e au cours FLS3500 pour obtenir un certificat de compétence en français.  .....
11. J'ai communiqué avec un agent d'accueil/un membre du personnel sur le campus en français.  **H**  
 **H**  
 **M**
12. J'ai écouté 5 chansons d'artistes Canadiens en français.  .....

Commentaires: .....

.....

.....

# Draw for Prizes

- After completing a certain required number of risks (not all risks), learners are able to submit their passports to a lottery to a draw for prizes, including:
  - gift cards
  - event tickets
  - promotional merchandise
- Monetary and in-kind donations are sought by LingRisk team members from the university, community partners, and private donors.

## YOUR PROGRESS

*Congratulations! You can now tally the number of risks you have taken and participate in a draw for prizes.*

### **Reminder about the submission rules:**

*A minimum of **20 risks** (including repeated ones) must be completed before submitting the passport to be entered in the draw for prizes. The submission period for the draw is from **October 30, 2017** until **November 17, 2017**. You may submit the passport to your language teacher or to the OLBI reception desk (MHN 130) within this period.*

I have taken a total of \_\_\_\_\_ linguistic risks!

I am enrolled in (course code): ESL \_\_\_\_\_

Term: \_\_ Fall \_\_ Winter

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

# Propose your own risks, provide feedback, stay connected

- Campus TV adds (CCTV) and some posters promote the initiative.
- Students have the opportunity undertake risks that are not listed in the passport.
- They can also share new risks with others via email or social media.



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## PROPOSE YOUR OWN RISKS

*Use these blank pages to describe additional risks that you may have undertaken (optional). Please rate each risk as High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L).*

**I called a government toll-free number to request a service and was accidentally transferred to an agent who spoke in English. Rather than hanging up and redialling, or requesting to be transferred to a French-speaking agent, I completed the call. I felt empowered and proud.**

# Self-Assessment

- The passport contains a self-assessment page where participants rate their learning experience, progress and perceived usefulness of the passport.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

*After having completed the passport...*

- 1. I am more comfortable speaking English with strangers.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 2. I am more comfortable speaking English with people I know.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 3. Overall, I am more comfortable taking risks in English.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 4. I am more likely to communicate in English outside of the classroom.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 5. I am inspired to use English more often.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 6. My confidence in English has improved.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 7. This passport has helped me discover new opportunities for practising English.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree
- 8. Overall, this experience had a positive impact on my English skills.**  
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree

# Motivational Quotes & Slogans

- At the end of the passport the learners are offered some motivational quotes and slogans to help build their profile of independent, competent and confident second language users.

## LINGUISTIC RISK-TAKER PROFILE

*I am eager to use my second official language everywhere on campus and beyond!*

***I am not a native speaker of this language and I am okay with that!***

*Yes, I may have an accent but that's what makes me unique!*

***I am not afraid of making errors; they are natural and normal in language use!***

*I consider myself bilingual in French and English (even if one of my two official languages may be stronger than the other one).*





## Wrapping up part I

- Activity: Look through passports and circle up to three 'favourite' risks.
- Think of a time in your life when you have taken a linguistic risk.

More details about the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative (pedagogical perspectives)? Forthcoming article in the *Canadian Modern Language Review* (pre-pub version available): <https://olbi.uottawa.ca/about/academic-staff/slavkov-nikolay>

# Part II: Research Perspectives

## **Passport as a data collection tool:**

### Quantitative:

- Number of risks taken per participant.
- Type (category) of risks chosen.
- Level of proficiency.
- Frequency, risk repetition, time span of activities.
- Proposed additional risks by participants.
- Learner self-assessment and perceived usefulness of the tool.

### Qualitative:

- Comments learners may write for each risk or general comments at the end of the passport.
- Proposed new risks.



# In addition to the passport

## Ongoing

- Supplementary questionnaires (qualitative and quantitative data).
- Interviews and focus groups with language learners (tell us about their experience, effectiveness of the initiative, future improvements).
- Interviews with teachers who use the passport.

## Future

- Psychological scales (enjoyment, anxiety, Willingness to Communicate).
- Stimulated Recalls.
- Physiological measures.







# Research Questions

1. In what ways do learners engage in linguistic risk-taking (which risks / activities do they prefer to take and which ones do they shy away from?)
2. How does the initiative relate to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?
3. Are there differences between English Learners and French Learners in terms of engagement and in terms of preferred risks?
4. What new risks do learners propose?
5. What are overall learners' experiences with regard to the effectiveness of the initiative?





# Participants

- Subset of data, Winter Semester 2018:  
n= 69 FLS  
n= 38 ESL  
total=107





# Most Commonly Taken Risks

## French Learners

1. I watched a YouTube video in French
2. I sent a text message in French
3. I received a bilingual email and I read the French part
4. I read a news article in French
5. I used uoZone, Google Apps or Virtual Campus in French

## English Learners

1. I sent a text message in English
2. I ordered food on campus in English
3. I watched a YouTube video in English
4. I sent an email to a uOttawa professor in English
5. I watched a movie or a show at home in English without subtitles

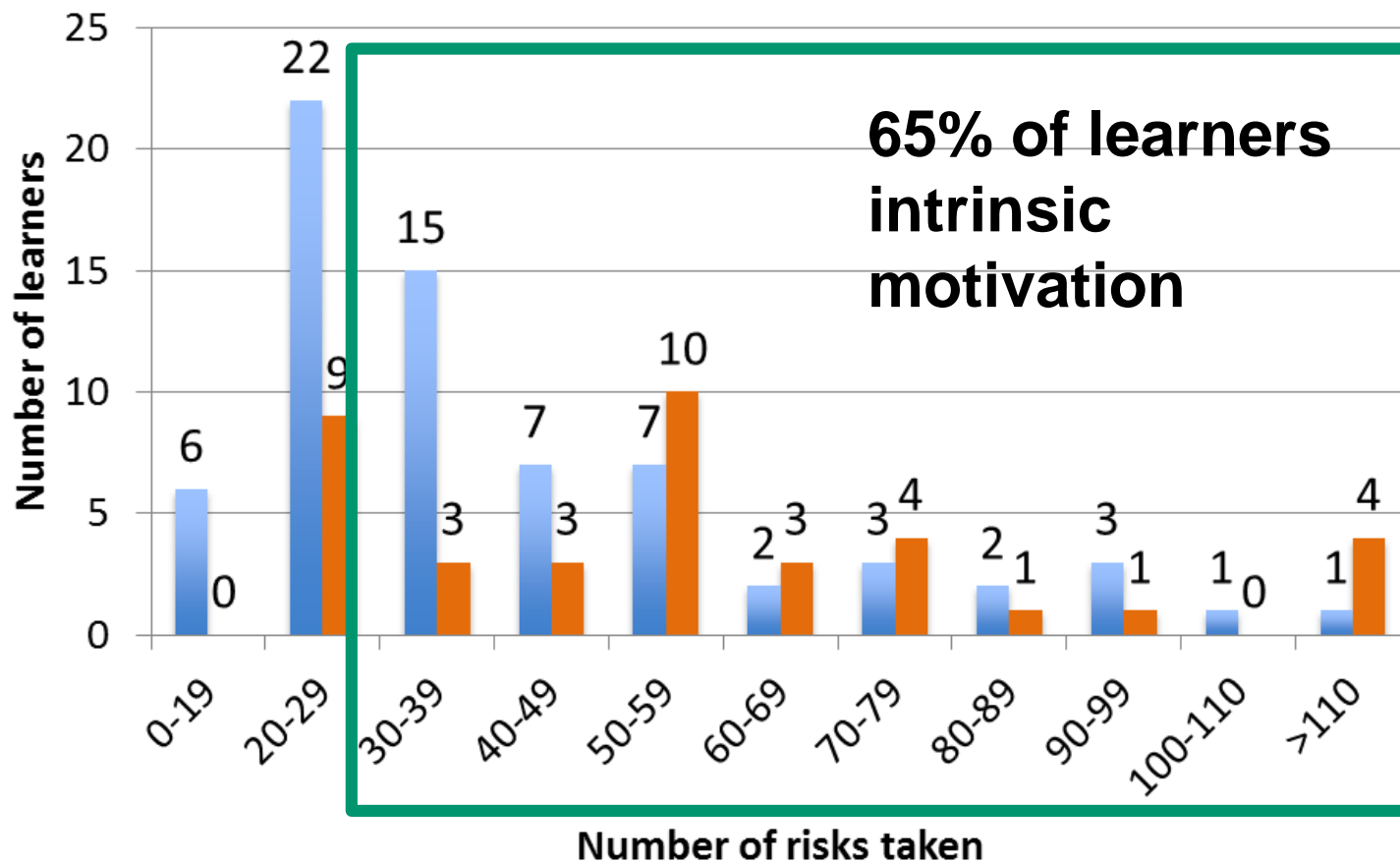
→ 4 of the top 5 in both populations involve technology.

→ 6 of the top 10 risks overlap for the two learner populations



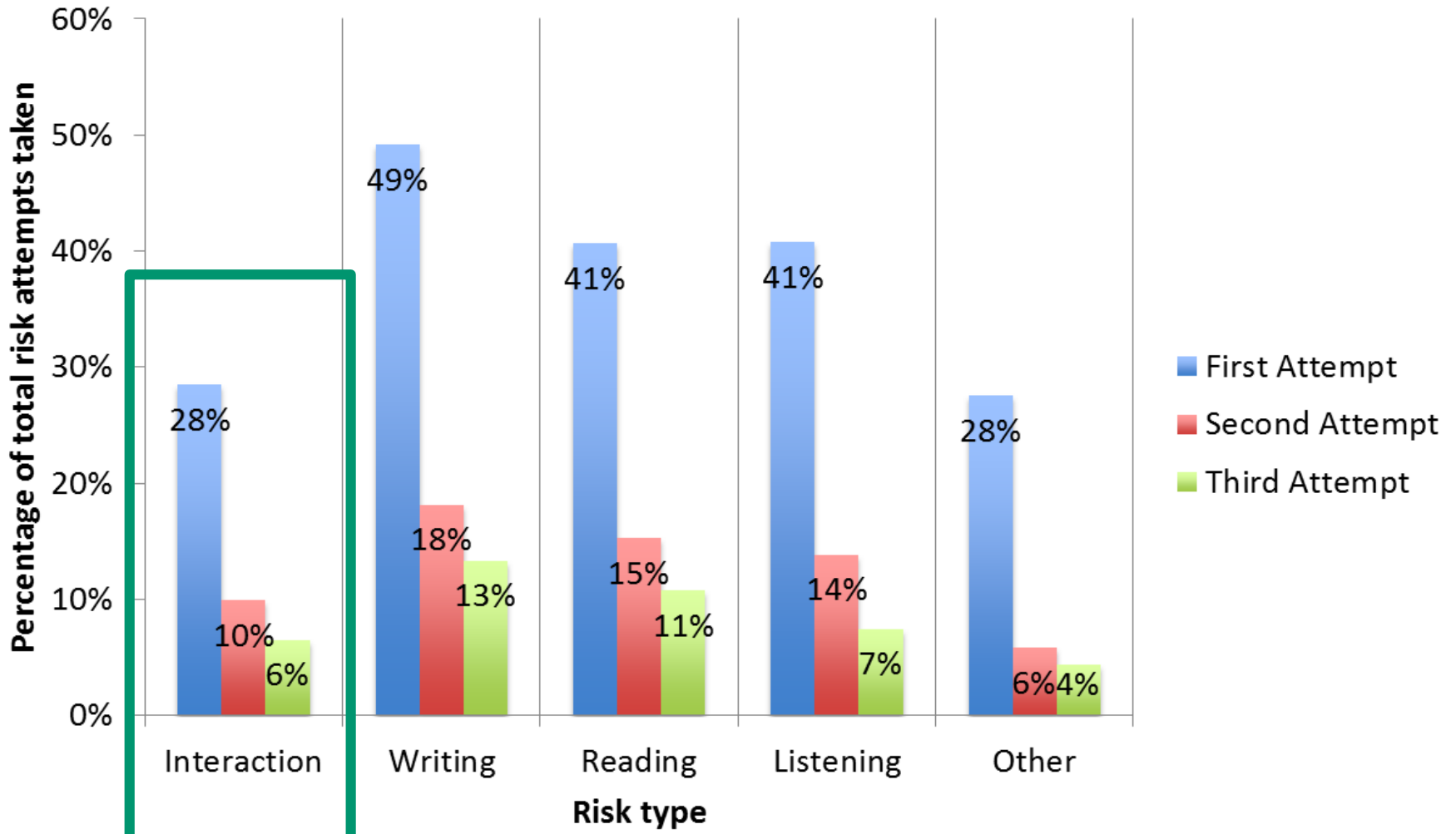
# Number of Risks Taken

**Total Number of Risks Taken**  
FLS: n=69 (blue); ELS n=38 (orange)



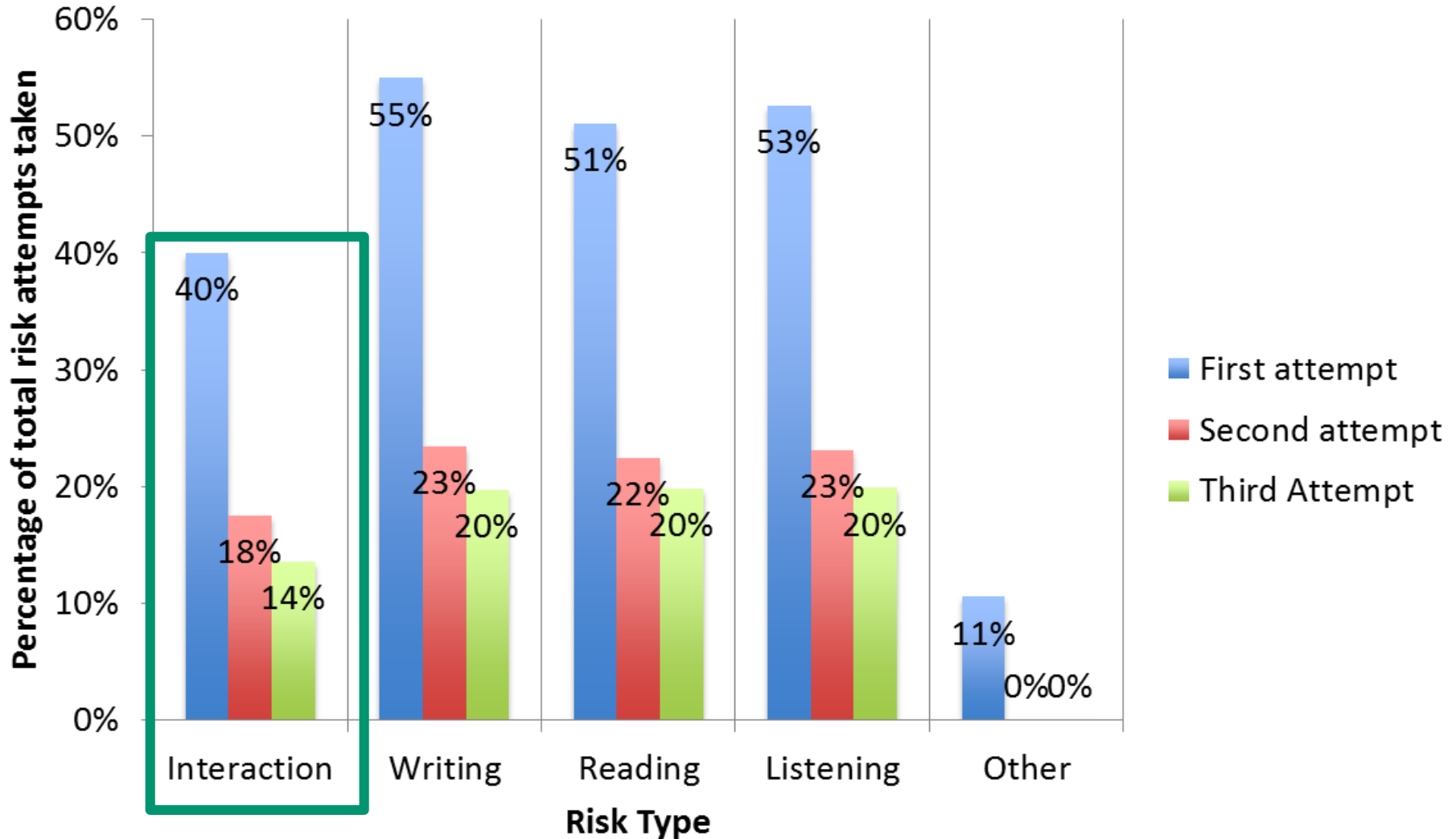
# Risks by Type: French Learners

Risks Attempted by Type (FSL) n=69



# Risks by Type: English Learners

Risks Attempted by Type (ESL) n=38

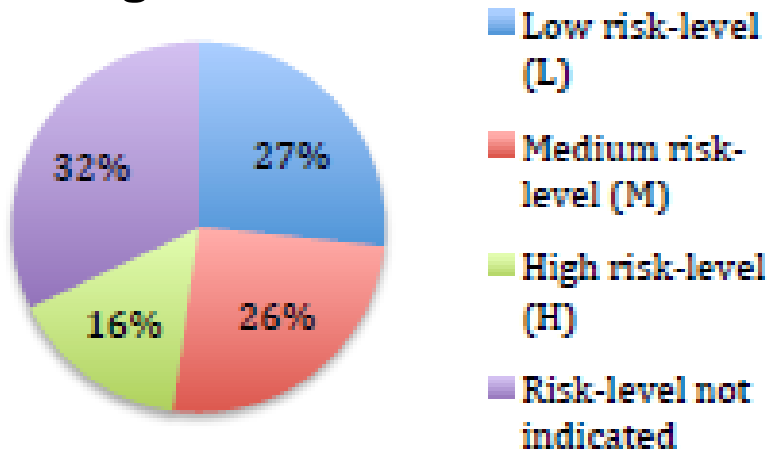




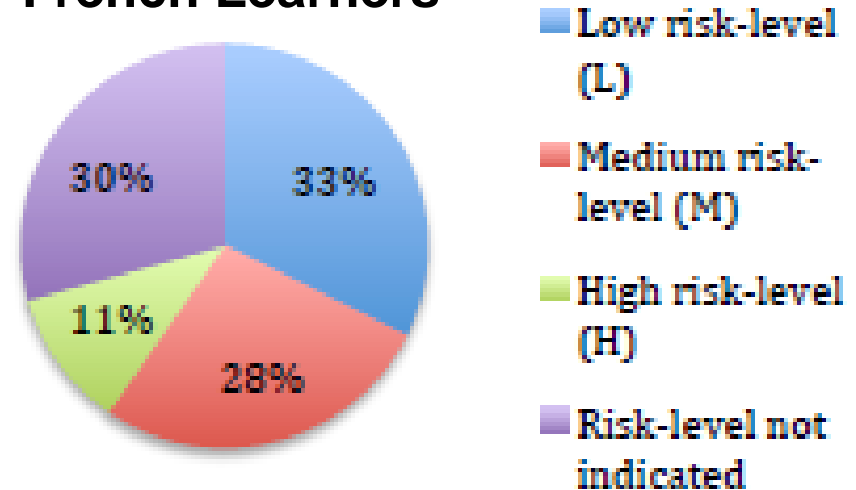
# Perceived Risk Level: High, Medium, Low

- HML: no pattern discovered in terms of decreasing perceived risk level with repetitions
- Most learners reported low to medium perceived risk level

### English Learners



### French Learners



## Risks proposed by students

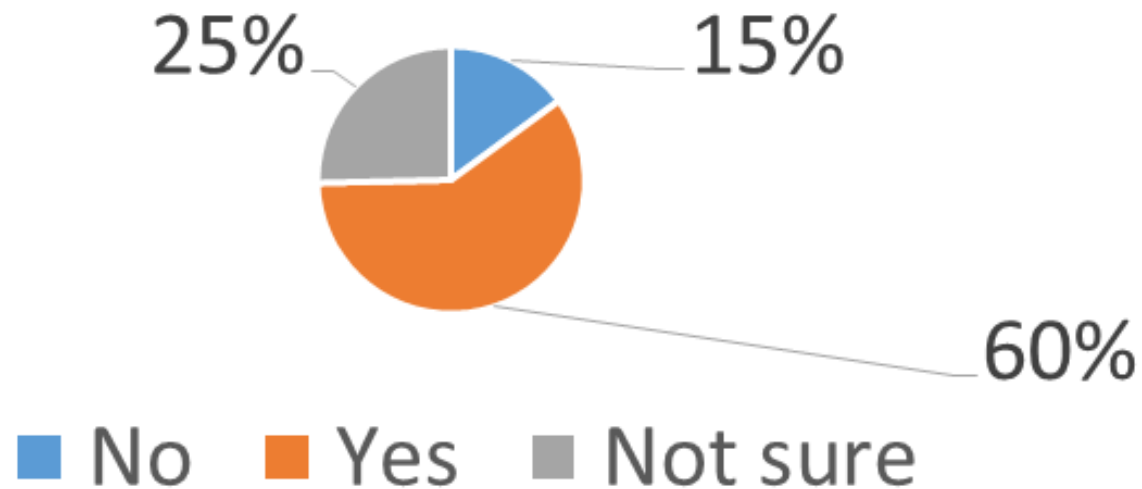


- J'ai aidé et conseillé une amie francophone quand elle a rompu avec son chum
- J'ai magasiné à Montreal et j'ai utilisé français au lieu d'anglais
- J'ai utilisé Facebook en français
- J'ai lu toutes les informations au musée canadien de la nature en français
- I watched a whole season of series in English without subtitles
- The biggest risk for me is to talk with a Canadian person and I want to be his/her friend.
- Introduce yourself in English with other people



## Additional Questionnaires (FLS, n=67, Fall 2018)

Has the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative motivated you to take more linguistic risks than before





## Wrapping up part II

- The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative
  - Has positive effects in terms of (intrinsic) motivation and engagement with language learning.
  - Encourages language socialization in the target language.
  - Applies in similar ways to English and French language learners (some evidence for universality).
  - Indicates a high level of technological engagement of university level language learners.
- Further analyses are ongoing; difficult to establish clear specific language learning gains as a result of risk-taking alone.



## Part III: Technology



- The printed passport booklet has certain limitations:
  - limited reach and scope
  - printing costs
  - learners may misplace or lose passports
  - paper-based tools may have a low level of impact in today's world of Digital Natives.

→ *A Linguistic Risk-Taking App* (Android Beta & iOS in development).

- pedagogical improvements (gamification, new features such as GEO-location, QR-coding, system of badges and medals).
- powerful research tool (ease of data collection, large-scale data capacity from various sources, linking to pre- and post- questionnaires, psychological scales and physiological measures).





R 10:15

Google

Say "Ok Google"



Contacts



hoopla



Calendar



ClassDojo



Gmail



Play Music



Keep



Super Voice R..



Drive



YouTube



Hangouts



Contacts



ISB11



Email



Le Conjugueur



Linguistic Risk..





**Passeport  
Passport**

Institut des langues officielles et du  
bilinguisme (ILOB)  
Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute  
(OLBI)

Splash Screen  
(while app  
loading)



Votre progrès: 15/230

# Mon centre de risques

Tous les risques linguistiques

Mes risques proposés












Analyser mes risques

Proposer mes propres risques

Linguistic Risk-Taking Hub Screen (main screen)

Bienvenue, Nikolay Slavkov

-  Mon profil
-  Pourquoi prendre des risques...
-  Règles d'engagement
-  Mon centre de risques
-  Soumettre mon passeport
-  Auto-évaluation
-  Évaluer cette application
-  À propos de cette application
-  Nos sponsors

< Fermer le menu

# Menu Screen

Votre progrès: 15/230

# Mon centre de risques

Tous les risques linguistiques

Mes risques proposés



Analyser mes risques

Proposer mes propres risques

Linguistic Risk-Taking Hub  
(main screen)



Votre progrès: 15/230

## Risques linguistiques

Cliquez sur le risque pour l'étamper (jusqu'à 3 fois) et identifiez son niveau.

1. J'ai assisté à un événement sur le campus (par ex. activité, cours, etc.) en français. >



2. J'ai commandé à manger sur le campus en français. >



3. J'ai parlé en français au service de santé de l'uOttawa. >



4. J'ai envoyé un courriel en français à un professeur de l'uOttawa. >



Choose a risk to take.

Votre progrès: 15/230

# Risque linguistique

3. J'ai parlé en français au service de santé de l'uOttawa.

Essai 1



Essai 2



## Niveau

Élevé

Moyen

Faible

+ COMMENTAIRES

CONFIRMER

What level was this risk: High, Medium or Low?

Votre progrès: 15/230

## Risque linguistique

3. J'ai parlé en français au service de santé de l'uOttawa.

Essai 1



Essai 2



### Niveau

Élevé



Moyen



Faible



+ COMMENTAIRES

CONFIRMER

Risk marked as "High" by learner.

Votre progrès: 16/230

## Risque linguistique

3. J'ai parlé en français au service de santé de l'uOttawa.

Essai 1



Essai 2



Essai 3



Niveau

Élevé



Moyen



Faible



Félicitations, vous avez estampillé le risque avec succès

- Third stamp received.
- Confirmation message at bottom of screen.

Votre progrès: 15/230

# Mon centre de risques

Tous les risques linguistiques

Mes risques proposés



Analyser mes risques

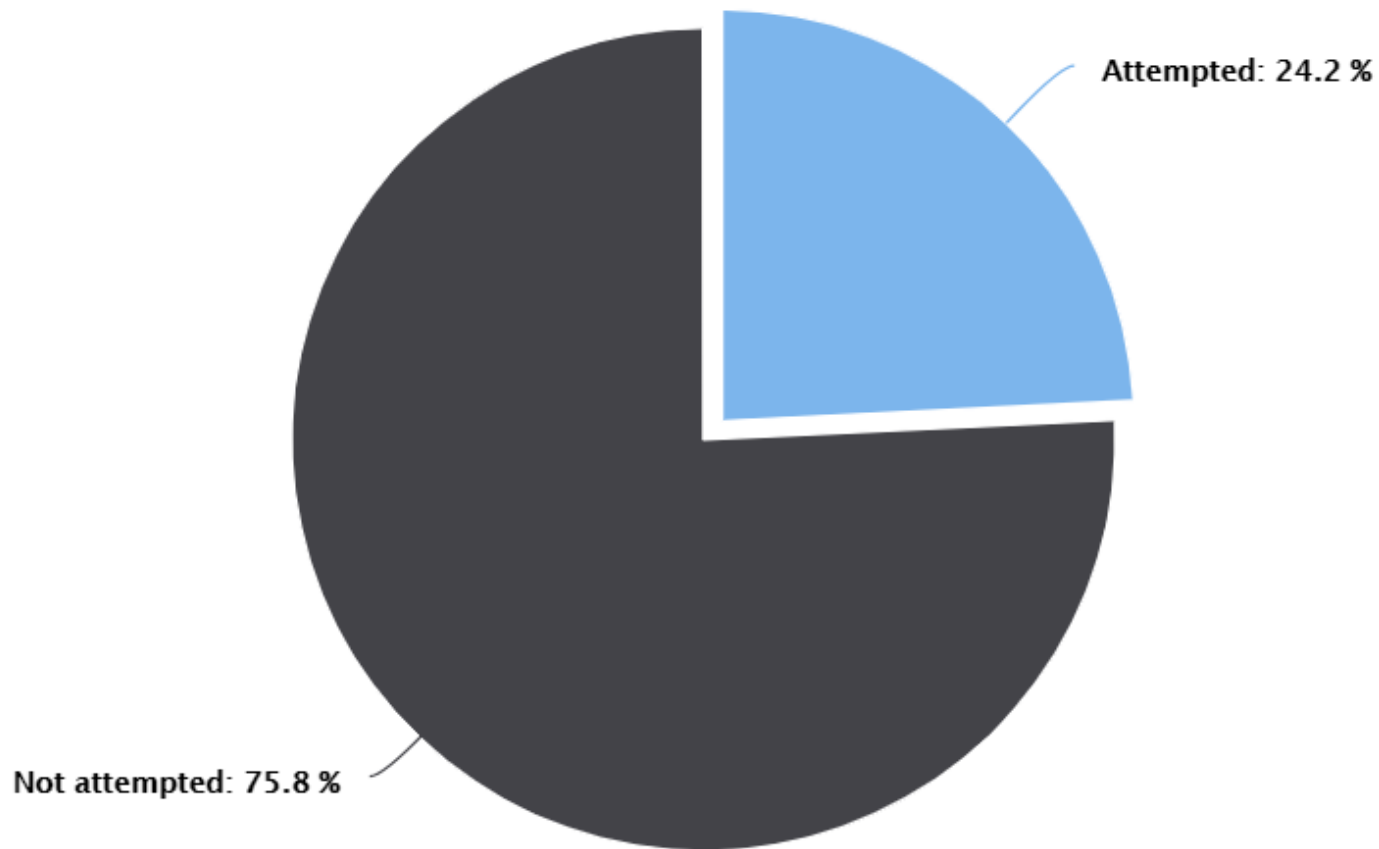
Proposer mes propres risques

Linguistic Risk-Taking Hub Screen (main screen)

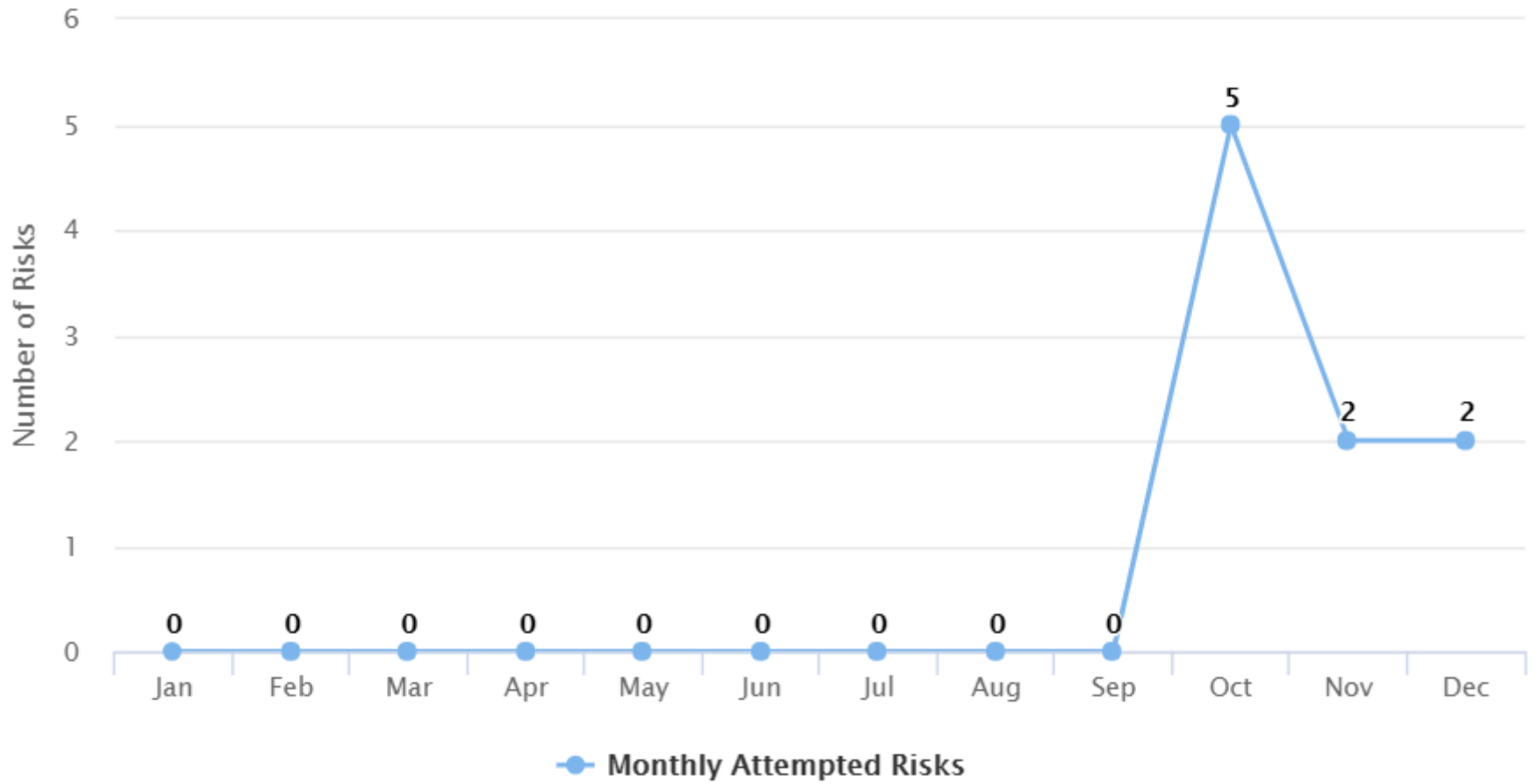


Your Level: Blue 8/33 

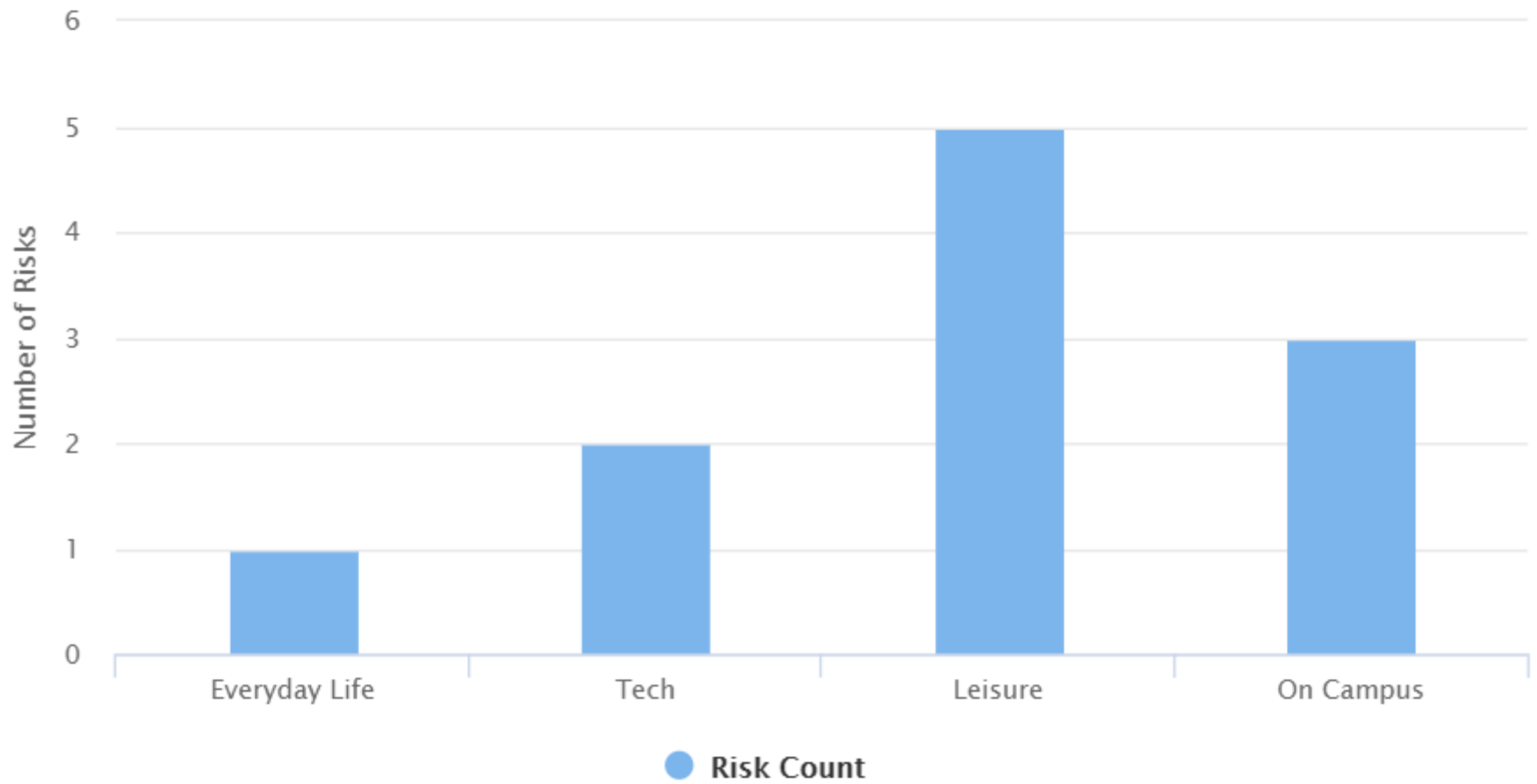
### Attempt Details



## Yearly Attempts



## Categories Wise Risk Attempts







Votre progrès: 15/230

## Mon centre de risques

Tous les risques linguistiques

Mes risques proposés












Analyser mes risques

Proposer mes propres risques

- My Linguistic Risk-Taking Hub Screen

Bienvenue, Nikolay Slavkov

-  Mon profil
-  Pourquoi prendre des risques...
-  Règles d'engagement
-  Mon centre de risques
-  Soumettre mon passeport
-  Auto-évaluation
-  Évaluer cette application
-  À propos de cette application
-  Nos sponsors

< Fermer le menu

- Submit Passport.
- Et voilà! Your name is entered in the draw for prizes!



# Wrapping up part III

## Print Passport vs. Phone App

- App's extra features:
  - stamps,
  - trophies,
  - levels based on number of risks achieved,
  - self-analysis options,
  - (geo-location)
  - (QR codes)
  - Ease of data collection
- Print booklet also has some advantages (analogy with passport stronger, nice feel).



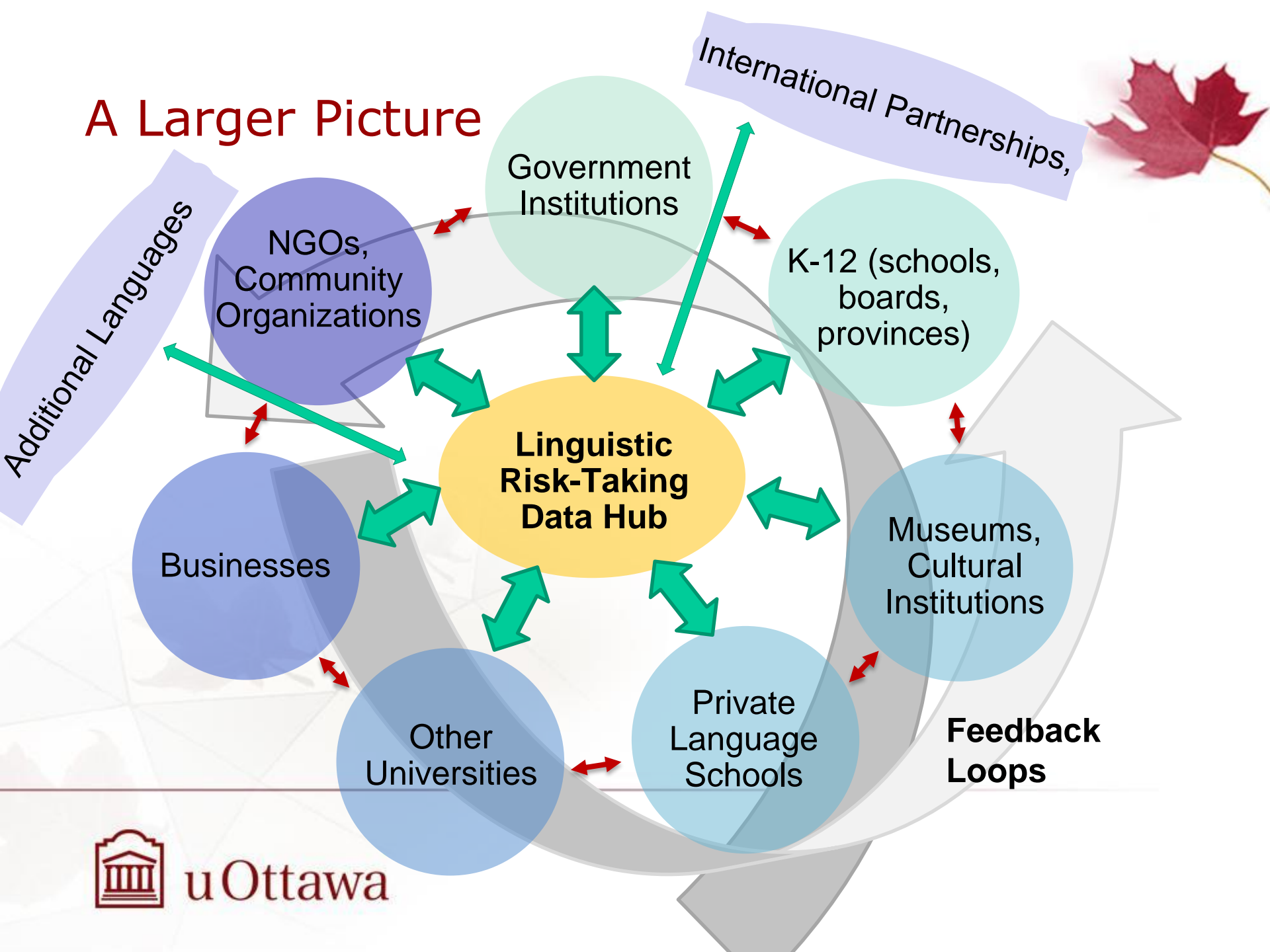
# Conclusion

The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative is both a Pedagogical and a Research Tool

- Pedagogical Tool: encourages L2 socialization (i.e. use outside of the classroom in various authentic and meaningful contexts).
- Research Tool: various insights about language usage ultimately related to learner engagement, anxiety, and enjoyment in practicing a second language.



# A Larger Picture



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# Part IV: Questions and Discussion

Over to you!

