THE EVOLUTION OF FRENCH LANGUAGE TERMINOLOGY IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION FROM CONFEDERATION THROUGH TO THE PRESENT

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The purpose of this paper is to provide the reader with an initial understanding of the evolution over time of French language terminology in the field of education. This essay traces the origins of the understandings of terms used in education; an area of responsibility that has largely been under provincial responsibility.

Let us begin by acknowledging the fact that before Europeans came to this country, First Nations and Inuit were present and enjoyed rich complex societies each with its own language and culture. The contact between these two existing worlds initially occurred in what we know today as Eastern Canada where the two main European settler communities were of French and British origin. After many conflicts and resulting changes in governance and legislation, these two colonial peoples came together in the *Act of Union* in 1841. The purpose of the legislation was to unite these two groups into one economy and to quell the unrest between the French and the British/English. It should be noted that, at the time, most French speakers were Roman Catholic while the English were overwhelmingly Protestant. The Union *Act* effectively left education to the responsibility of the two separate entities that made up the new united Canada. Anticipating the challenges ahead, however, the English Protestants obtained the right to establish their own Separate Schools in Lower Canada – Quebec, and this privilege was also extended to the French-speaking Roman Catholics of Upper Canada – Ontario. The interesting take away here is that French and English language education in Canada really began on confessional not linguistic grounds.

The notion of Separate Schools introduced in the *Act of Union* of 1841 remained in place and became part of the British North America (BNA) *Act* of 1867; specifically s. 93. The two dominant religious

groups were very involved in the respective education systems and as a result, the right to be educated in a Roman Catholic or Protestant school became part of the Canadians' rights vernacular. This went relatively unquestioned until the Manitoba Schools Question (1890). The demographic shift that occurred in Manitoba's population due to an influx of immigration saw Francophone numbers diminish in proportion to the overall population and, as a result, lose political power. The result was the overall secularization of the publicly funded school system and the emergence of clandestine French language schools. These French language schools continued to operate and eventually went on to be the basis for the establishment of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine. In Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, however, confessional Separate Schools continue to exist and operate today even though we have seen the establishment of French minority language (Francophone) school authorities.

Quebec society, for its part, continued to evolve under the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy. The foundational values of Quebec society were anchored in religion, family and agriculture and this continued under what is referred to today as the Duplessis Years – from 1936 through to 1959. During this time, Quebec's industrial economy was dominated by Anglophones, but the Roman Catholic clergy maintained a powerful influence over the province's population. In the 1950s, Quebec had among the highest fecundity rates in the world; eight children per fertile woman and by 1967, Quebec had approximately one third of the Canadian population.

With the passing of Maurice Duplessis in 1959, Quebec politics saw a change. Jean Lesage, a Liberal premier, led the province through a major shift, away the predominance of the Roman Catholic Church towards a society where the French language and culture took centre stage. It was also a time when society began questioning the traditional values of having a large family, the role of women, the role of the Church, the dominance of the economy by the Anglophone minority, etc. This is the period referred to as the Quiet Revolution (la Révolution tranquille). During this period, we also see the beginnings and rise of Quebec separatism. On the national scene, we prepared for Expo '67 and saw the work of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B) Commission, also referred to as the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission. This commission was charged with three main areas of inquiry: the extent of bilingualism in the federal government, the role of public and private organizations in promoting better cultural relations, and the opportunities for Canadians to become bilingual: French and English. The Commission's guiding principle was that both French and English could be used as languages of communication in the federal institutions affecting the lives of members of the respective communities.

One piece of the B&B Commission's work intrigued a group of parents at Margaret Pendlebury Elementary School in St-Lambert, Quebec. In 1965-66, these parents worked with the school authority to start a French immersion program. This program, which proved to be very successful, provided students with a French language bath. Researchers, educators and parents quickly realized that this program made it possible for Canadians to become bilingual. The Federal government was very interested in this program as well and wanted to con-

tribute some funds as an incentive to promote the program's growth.

Canada also saw the adoption of the *Official Languages Act* in February of 1969 and the establishment of what we have come to know as the Official Language in Education Programs (OLEP), which steadily grew in breadth and scope. Because these Federal programs targeted basic education programs under provincial/territorial jurisdiction, funds were funnelled through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). One of the roles of the CMEC is to protect the provincial/territorial jurisdiction of education from federal interference; however, French and English Second Language Programs were seen as vital means for Canadians to becoming bilingual.

As might have been expected, not all school jurisdictions in Canada were ready to embrace the new phenomenon of enhanced French second language programs; French immersion, Bilingual programs, Extended French programs, etc. In light of this, Keith Spicer, then Commissioner of Official Languages, united a group of like-minded parents who were experiencing difficulties with their local school jurisdictions in their desire to provide a French immersion program for their children. These parents quickly organized, and in March of 1977, Canadian Parents for French (CPF) was created. This organization flourished and today represents a network of over 25,000 volunteers working at the National, Branch and Chapter levels to further bilingualism by promoting and creating opportunities for youth to learn and use French.

In Quebec, the attitudes evolved quickly and in one generation saw the sovereignist movement bring to the provincial electorate in May of 1980 the referendum for sovereignty-association. The "No" side won this referendum by a slim majority. Two years later, in 1982, Canada brought in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. This was effectively an amendment to the Constitution and included s. 23 Minority Language Rights. It is interesting to note here that while Francophone parents were extremely pleased with the advances in French-language programming throughout the country, they began to see that these programs, including French immersion, were not meeting the needs of their children. A case that began in Alberta saw a group of parents work to establish a Francophone school. This case eventually made its way to the Supreme Court and is known as the Mahé Decision or Dickson Judgment of March 1990. This judgment granted the linguistic minorities (French and English) the right to governance, among other gains. As a result, the provinces had to establish governance structures in their education systems. British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and others created separate Francophone school authorities in each of their territories. An example of this was the establishment of la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM). In Alberta and Ontario for example, where Separate School Authorities still existed, the Mahé Decision saw the creation of the Quadripartite School System; an English public, an English separate, a Francophone public and a Francophone separate school jurisdiction.

The establishment of minority language schools saw the bifurcation of French-language programming bringing some clarity to the distinction between French first language and French second-language programming. These programs were and continue to be instrumental in constructing students' iden-

tities with respect to language. An example of the difference shows up in the choice of pronouns. In a French first language program, students are exposed to the first-person pronouns I and we, my and our, etc. For example, "I am Francophone and my hero is Jacques Villeneuve." Or, "we are Francophone and our artists are…". In a French second language program, we would see "they are Francophones and their artists are…". The point here is that the program builds a sense of belonging to a group; the French first language program reinforces belonging to that sociolinguistic group whereas a French second language program maintains the students' belonging to their socio-linguistic group of origin. French immersion and other French second language programs do not make Francophones of their students.

It has been 50 years since we officially became a bilingual country with the passing of the *Official Languages Act*. Much has been gained over these past 50 years in terms of language rights, services in French and English, opportunities for Canadians to learn and use both French and English across Canada; we are even seeing a "rapprochement" – where graduates of French second language programs and graduates of Francophone programs are sharing the same spaces, same events, etc. We are celebrating these achievements in 2019 and look forward to seeing further developments over the next 50 years as we continue to implement the *Official Languages Act* – a crucial piece of legislation for Canada.