INTERSECTIONS OF DUALITY

The Relationship Between Ethnocultural Identity and Minority Language

ABSTRACT

What is the importance of minority language in Canada? What measures contribute to its upkeep? The author explores the intersection of linguistic and ethnic identification, as well as the political questions that are affected by it. Data extracted from the 2001 Census (Statistics Canada) as well as from an Environics study are presented throughout the text.

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Language is an important vehicle for the transmission of culture and a necessary means for communication to permit state and society to conduct its ongoing business. In 1969, Canada enacted a legislation recognizing English and French as the country's official languages. In so doing, its main intention was to favour greater equality between its two principal language communities by widening the opportunity to offer services in the French language. Establishing official languages did not imply the creation of official cultures; hence in 1971 the federal government introduced a policy of official multiculturalism aimed at widening opportunity for cultural expression and identification. Many Francophones contended that multicultural policy risked putting various minority ethnic cultures on the same footing as French culture and thus substantively and symbolically diminishing the latter. This view was enhanced by the idea that since English was dominant outside of Québec, the minority ethnic cultures would be expressed in that language. Paradoxically, spokespersons for some of the minority ethnic groups insisted that opportunities to preserve their heritage were undercut both substantively and symbolically by the adoption of official languages, thereby assuming other cultures could flourish without support for the corresponding language. Reitz (1974) has observed that: "ethnic language retention is a cornerstone of the ethnic communities themselves. Failure to learn the ethnic language leads to failure to participate in the ethnic community and this to a large extent explains reduced participation in the second and third generations." But ethnic identification can persist without knowledge of the corresponding heritage language (though it might be argued that such ethnic expression is a diluted and/or highly symbolic manifestation of identity).

As a marker of identity there are both vertical and horizontal dimensions to language knowledge and use. Fishman regards language as "a reference for loyalties and animosities, an indicator of social status and personal relationship, a marker of situations and topics as well as the societal goals and the larger-scale value-laden arenas of interaction that typify every speech community." While non-official languages are very often an important part of ethnocultural identity, official language knowledge is deemed critical to citizen engagement in Canada. In effect, knowledge of an official language is increasingly considered essential to successful economic and social integration. Furthermore, knowledge of both English and French-official bilingualism are highly valued by the federal state and its enhancement is viewed as a national priority. While not discouraged, other forms of bilingualism are not attributed the value of official bilingualism. The relationship between ethnocultural identity and minority language status is complex. For the most part it has been held that the adoption of the English language by the vast majority of immigrants outside and an important number within that province has diminished non-official languages and thus reduced ethnic salience amongst longer established groups. Immigrants have provided a significant demographic stimulus to majority language communities as well as the minority language group within Québec. As English is the dominant language of most health and educational institutions outside of Québec (with the exception of organizations for official language minorities), ethnocultural identities are more likely to be given expression in civil society and in the arts and culture domain.

An Association for Canadian Studies-Environics survey asked 2000 Canadians about the most important part of their identity and culture. As observed in the table below, one-third of respondents gave language as their reply. with one-quarter of Canadians giving ancestry and ethnic origin.

Which is the most important part of your identity and culture? Canada and English Language and French Language spoken at home (First Mention)

	All	English Spoken at Home	French Spoken at Home
Language	33	24	61
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	29	14
Religion	11	12	8
Political ideology/ orientation	11	12	7
Gender	9	11	4
Social class	7	7	5

Source: Environics Research Group for the Association for Canadian Studies, Survey on Markers of Identity, March 2003

As to immigrants that are neither of British nor French descent, the largest plurality of respondents gave ancestry and ethnic identification as their marker while non-European immigrants were more likely to cite language as their principal marker of identity. Still, this date leaves unanswered the issue of the respective degree of importance attributed to ethnic and linguistic identification.

Comprehending the notion of language adaptation is enhanced by the availability and use of data on ethnic origins. In the table below one observes a close relationship in 2001 between single ethnic origin, the language first learned (mother tongue), the ability to speak the corresponding non-official language and the language most often spoken at home. This is particularly applicable for persons of the Chinese, Greek, Portuguese and Polish origins whereas this is less the case for those of German, Ukrainian, Dutch and to a lesser degree of Italian descent, all of which have been longer established in Canada. In the case of Russian and Arabic, those persons that include identification of ethnic background to those groups within multiple origins are more likely to have retained the corresponding language than is the case for the more established groups.

Language Transfers

The retention of heritage languages is a result of the combination of time of establishment, age and ethnic mixing and the critical mass of the community notably with respect to institutional depth and opportunities to acquire and/or employ the heritage language. But other factors play a role as well, such as the pull or influence of dominant languages on persons whose mother tongue is neither English nor French.

The difference between the number of persons whose mother tongue is French and those who speak the language at home are generally referred to as language transfers. Language transfers vary across the groups, in part arising from when they arrived here, and thereafter, their ability and opportunity to operate in their language of origin (and the ability to operate in the English language in the case of first and second language French-speakers).

The table below focuses on the experience of certain long-established groups (Italian and Greek) and whose members, for the most part, have arrived more recently (Arab and Spanish) in looking at the percentage that no longer use the heritage language most often in their homes. It is persons of Italian mother tongue that are most likely to have shifted to use of an official language in their home followed by the Japanese and Greek mother tongue. Across the age spectrum however the patterns differ somewhat with older Greek speakers, these speakers being more likely to have switched to official language use in the home than Italians. The t.ransmission to the younger cohort remain stronger amongst the Greek group. In the case of mother tongue Japanese it is the older group that is more likely to have shifted than the younger, perhaps due to more recent influx of Japanese immigration offsetting the transfers from the very rooted segment of the group. The importance of transmission on the basis of the respective strength of ethnic attachments may play a role in this regard. In the case of

Ethnic Origins (Total and Single), Mother Tongue and Ability to Speak the Corresponding Non-Official Language for selected groups in Canada, 2001

Canada	Total Ethnic Origins	Single Ethnic Origin	Ability to Speak	Mother Tongue	Language Spoken Most Often at Home
German	2 704 760	705 600	494 325	455 540	118 100
Dutch (Netherlands)	923 315	316 220	128 835	133 040	14 345
Polish	817105	260 415	230 905	215 010	118 340
Russian	336 920	70 895	144 930	96 910	65 050
Ukrainian	1 071 075	326 195	163 260	157 585	31 540
Greek	215 105	143 785	135 310	126 370	71 165
Italian	1 270 370	726 275	523 270	493 990	206 415
Portuguese	357690	252 835	227 570	222 855	120 650
Chinese Languages	1 094 700	936 210	1 025 540	872 405	721 885
Japanese	85 230	53 175	65 030	36 175	18 900
Spanish (1)	447 825	213 475	610 575	260 785	177 455
Arabic	347 955	238 600	290 280	220 535	147 980

1. Spanish corresponds to the ethnic origins of both Latin Americans and Spanish.

Percentage that have shifted from the language first learned and still understood to speaking an official language most often at home in Canada for selected groups by age cohort, 2001

	Italian	Greek	Spanish	Arabic	Japanese
Total	58.2	43.6	36.9	37.8	51.7
0-24	74.7	51.5	36.4	36.7	42.9
25-54	52.0	55.3	38.6	39.3	51.2
55 and over	30.4	22.6	31.3	35.7	59.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001

the Spanish and Arab groups lower levels of language shift tend not to be influenced by age in the same way as the European groups.

Where measured on the provincial level, the groups in Québec tend to have the lowest rates of language shift amongst persons of Italian, Greek and Spanish mother tongue with the highest such transfers occurring in British Columbia. This tends to be explained by the mix of French and English not creating as strong a pull to the official language. Yet it fails to explain the discrepancy between

Percentage that have shifted from the language first learned and still understood to speaking an official language most often at home for selected groups in Québec, Ontario and British Columbia, 2001

	Italian	Greek	Spanish	Arabic	Japanese
Québec	53.6	32.4	27.2	39.1	45.3
Ontario	58.6	48.4	38.9	33.2	37.0
British Columbia	69.5	55.2	42.0	47.2	42.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001

Ontario and British Columbia on the one hand and why amongst Arabic and Japanese groups it is in Ontario where the home use of the corresponding language is the highest.

It is also the case amongst Québec's younger population where the rate of transfer from a language other than English or French as the language first learned in the home to the use of an official language is less likely than it is in either Ontario

Percentage that have shifted from the language first learned and still understood to speaking an official language most often at home for selected groups in Québec, Ontario and British Columbia, age 0-24, 2001

	Italian	Greek	Spanish	Arabic	Japanese
Québec	70.9	43.0	27.2	35.6	45.2
Ontario	78.0	59.4	38.9	35.6	36.8
British Columbia	77.9	62.7	42.0	38.7	42.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001

or British Columbia though in the case of Arabic the three languages are near equal in the degree to which they are preserved in their homes.

Recent data from the 2002 ethnic diversity survey of Statistics Canada confirms that ethnic identification is valued by most groups with the exception of the most-long standing in the country (i.e. Ukrainian, German and Dutch). Ethnic mixing or intermarriage results in considerable erosion of non-official language knowledge, though in the case of persons with multiple declarations of Greek and Italian descent, the language losses are not quite as steep in Québec and Ontario (Jedwab, 2000). It would be useful to understand in exogenous situations why some choose to preserve the heritage language.

Immigrant and ethnocultural groups and official language minorities

Over the course of its history, migration has shaped and reshaped the English-speaking community of Québec over much of its existence and has played a fundamental role in identity formation. As such the Anglophone population is characterized by a significant degree of ethnocultural and ethnoracial diversity. Still there is some debate around whether all such individuals can be considered anglophones. In part this has to do with the different criteria employed by federal and Québec authorities relative to the broader question of who is a Québec anglophone. The federal Treasury Board has tended to use the first official language category in order to estimate the requirements of English-speaking institutions vis-à-vis their constituency. This inclusive definition results in federal authorities crediting Québec's Anglophone population with 300 000 more individuals than do provincial authorities who by employ mother tongue. In the case of the Québec government in the year 2001, the Québec Anglophone population constituted some 600 000 persons whereas by virtue of the provincial definition, there were more than 900 000. Much of the difference is a function of those persons for whom English is their principal official language but not the language they first learned and still understood in other words their mother tongue. Québec authorities are more inclined to consider many of these immigrants and their descendants as allophones and thus ineligible for provincial designation as anglophones.

On the basis of single declarations of ethnic origin, some 37% of persons whose first official language spoken is English are of Canadian, British, French and Aboriginal descent. Another 37% report European backgrounds other than Canadian, British and French and about one quarter report non-European origins. The ethnic composition of the anglophone population differs when contrasting the Montréal region with the rest of Québec. As observed below on the basis of single declarations in Montréal those declaring Canadian British, French and Aboriginal origins represent just over one quarter of the population. Outside the Montréal region 84% of the anglophone population is of Canadian, British, French and Aboriginal descent.

While emotional debate over language issues tends to draw reaction beyond those identifying with English as their mother tongue, clearly the English language does not reinforce minority ethnic cultures (British origin has been

declining in Québec). By no means is identification with the English language unimportant and indeed it is the defining element of the diverse Anglophone group. Rather it is essential to the promotion of non-British expressions of ethnicity. The situation contrasts with that of francophones outside of Québec where with a relatively low share of persons with non Canadian French background the link between language and ethnicity is considerably stronger.

Ethnocultural diversity has become an object of heightened attention in the Francophone communities outside Québec. The vast majority of immigrants that settle outside of Québec adopt English as their principal language. Until very recently the attraction of immigrants from French-speaking parts of the country outside Québec has not been a priority. In the year 2000 some 4.6% of all immigrants settling outside of Québec knew French only upon arrival with another 4.3% declaring knowledge of both English and French. In 2004 the respective shares were 4.5% for French only (1 359 persons) and 7.3% for English and French (5 762 individuals). There was a concern that even if such immigrants settled in the rest of Canada that too would make English their principal language. Still, in light of the demographic vulnerability of French language communities outside Québec, interest has grown in increasing the numbers of French-speaking immigrants. While immigration is not viewed as the single remedy to the demographic challenges confronting Francophones outside Québec it can contribute to enhancing the vitality of minority linguistic communities.

The terms ethnocultural and ethnoracial Francophones are increasingly used to describe those persons outside of Québec that are not of French Canadian descent but for whom French is the principal official language (defined in this case as the first official language spoken). These terms are best described as hybrid categories that emerge from the intersection between ethnicity and/or racial identification with language. Thus individuals who define themselves as ethnocultural and ethnoracial are expressing an attachment to dual or multiple markers of cultural identity.

The classification system that focuses on language knowledge and use is crucial to the determination of the number of members of official language communities in a given territory. Those who question the use of mother tongue to make this evaluation prefer the results obtained on the basis of the mixed variable of first official language spoken (hereafter FOLS) first introduced by Statistics Canada in the year 1991. Prior to its introduction, the mother tongue and to a lesser degree the language spoken at home were the barometers used to assess the number of Francophones. When FOLS is used, the size and weight of French-speaking immigrants increases within the francophone community. On the basis of the first official language spoken in the year 1996 some 44,000 Francophone immigrants were settled in Canada outside Québec, a difference of about 4,000 with the number arrived at with the mother tongue variable. As observed below, in the province of Ontario in 2001, there were 5,000 more immigrant Francophones on the basis of the FOLS criteria than by virtue of mother tongue. On the other there are 4,000 less Francophones overall on that basis (the addition of dual declarations for each designation shifts the numbers in favour of the FOLS group).

While the real number of Francophone immigrants constitutes less than 4% of the mother tongue francophone population outside Québec, their share of certain communities is somewhat greater, arising from the heavy concentration of these new arrivals in the major urban centers. For example, in Toronto they account for nearly

Ontario	Mother Tongue	First Official Language Spoken
Total	493,630	489,910
Non-Immigrant	462,010	452,775
Born in Province	319,490	312,745
Born Elsewhere in Canada	142,520	140,020
Immigrant	29,800	34,725
Carribean and Bermuda	2,370	3 340
Europe	13,285	14,135
Africa	8 790	10,900
Asia	3,435	4,205
Immigrants Arrived Between 1990 and 2000	9,705	13,060

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001

Selected Single Ethnic Origin Other than Canadian, British, French and Aboriginal for Selected Groups Residing Outside of Québec, 2001

Rest of Canada	French MT	FOLS	Home Language	Knowledge of English and French
German	765	990	665	24,650
Italian	1,720	2,620	1,190	44,360
Chinese	1,375	2,050	770	31,675
Ukrainian	325	365	220	4,110
Dutch (Netherlands)	295	380	255	15,340
Polish	495	830	300	15,225
East Indian	890	1,260	555	29,395
Portuguese	435	1,055	475	13,445
Jewish	1,490	1,685	440	19,010

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001

one out of four persons of French mother tongue and in Vancouver approximately one out of five Francophones are born outside the country. In Toronto on the basis of mother tongue and FOLS the Francophone population is around 33,000. However the FOLS Francophones in Toronto represent approximately 10 900 persons (32.7%) as opposed to mother tongue Francophone immigrants with around 9 400 foreign-born (28.6%).

Moreover, the numbers increase when dual declarations are included. Indeed estimating the number of Francophones is further connected to the manner in which such declarations are apportioned – that is, the distribution of persons who give both French and English as their first official language spoken.

Analysts have tended to allot half of those who make such declarations to the English speaking population and the other half to the Francophone communities. There is a considerable difference between the number of immigrants who declare both English and French as their mother tongue and those who declared their first official language spoken to be both English and French. Based on the equal distri-bution of those who make such dual declarations, there would be another 27,000 immigrants residing in Canada outside Québec whose first official language spoken was French. When mother tongue is the criteria slightly over 2,000 Francophone immigrants would be added to this segment of the population.

Where ethnocultural and ethnoracial Francophones have dual or multiple markers of identity, the notion of community and belonging will evolve. Amongst official language minorities, ethnic ties have traditionally been linked to language. With the presence of Francophones of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, the community becomes increasingly diverse and hence the relationship between ethnicity and language continues to grow and change. Ideally, identity formation will be intersecting as opposed to competing as regards ethnicity and language. It is necessary to examine the process of adaptation of ethnocultural Francophones and their children to acquire greater insight into the nature, salience and interrelationship of their language and ethnic identification. Whatever demographic and identity-based criteria are preferred for defining Francophones, the increased presence of ethnocultural Francophones can have important policy ramifications. The intersection of language and ethnic identification leads to policy intersection in the areas of immigration and settlement, multiculturalism and official languages.

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