Minority Populations in Canadian Second Language Education

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Edited by
Katy Arnett and Callie Mady

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Introduction: Broadening the Lens of Second Language Education in Canada: Minority Populations in Canadian Second Language Education

Katy Arnett and Callie Mady

In 1972, the Canadian second language education system received worldwide attention when the results of the 'St Lambert Experiment' were published, chronicling the development and initial years of a French immersion program in Quebec for Anglophone children (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Using French as the language of instruction for nearly all aspects of the school day, the teachers in St Lambert were not only able to help their Anglophone students learn their subjects, but also develop proficiencies in the target language. In the 40 years hence, immersion programming has been touted as 'the great Canadian success story' (Hayden, 1988) having been identified as not only the best way to learn French in Canada (Genesee, 2007; Lazuruk, 2007), but also the program model for successful second language learning in general. Such a positive reputation is perhaps, in part, due to corresponding positive academic results from various research studies (e.g. Genesee, 1987, 2004; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Turnbull *et al*., 2001). Without a doubt, the innovation and success of French immersion programming earned global respect for Canada's efforts to promote its official language bilingualism within a multicultural context.

Over this same 40-year period, shifts in the Canadian landscape have facilitated the development of new understandings in other areas of second language learning. These new knowledge bases have often been overshadowed by the successes of French immersion, but in light of the world's

continued expectations of multilingual skills, the increased determination to revive and sustain our different heritages and the changing views about the rights and potential of *all* individuals in society, Canada is once again in the position to offer the world new ideas about second, third and fourth language development. This volume, as the title conveys, is about offering a broader view of Canadian contributions to second language education; French immersion is now just one of many parts of the language education spectrum in this country.

We have sought to offer this broader view through the lens of various minority populations in Canada, as these groups have been typically the most overlooked in considerations of second, additional, or heritage language education. As a country, Canada is working to facilitate and protect the rights of those with less power in society, and while there is still much work to do, gains are starting to emerge in four key areas in language education: newcomers working to develop skills in both of the country's official languages; newcomers' maintenance of their heritage languages and cultures as they integrate into Canadian society; individuals with disabilities or difficulties seeking access to the same opportunities as everyone else; and Aboriginal populations seeking to revive, preserve and promote their Indigenous languages. These are the four sub-themes of this volume.

Newcomers Working to Develop Skills in Canada's Official Languages

Although Canada has always attracted newcomers, in the past, immigrants were most often from countries that shared one of Canada's official languages. More recently, Canada is attracting immigrants whose languages are from non-European language families. The increase in the numbers of, and the diverse origins of these newcomers' home languages have led policy makers and second language teachers to question if and how students who are learning English in 'English'-dominant Canada should learn French. In this sub-section, the contributors focus on trying to move that dialogue further, by considering the performance, motivation and learning experiences of the students in this learning situation.

Callie Mady's chapter opens this section, as she compares newcomer students' attitudes toward the study of French as a second official language (FSOL) with the attitudes of Canadian-born unilingual and multilingual students. Using questionnaire data, interviews and language proficiency assessments, Mady sought to determine how differences in attitudes may also link to differences in performance in French. Her findings revealed

that the most positive attitudes and the greatest successes were within the immigrant student sub-group. Multilingual students born in Canada had more positive views than those of unilingual students also born in Canada, but less positive views than those of the immigrant students. The unilingual Canadian-born students also had the lowest scores in French skills. Mady's findings reveal that calls to exempt immigrant students from FSOL programs may be misplaced, as this student population was the most positive and in several areas, the more successful student group. Further, Mady situates these findings in relation to the data trends of Canada's immigrant population to argue that efforts to promote multilingualism in Canada's immigrant population as they integrate into Canadian society may somehow be falling short.

Drawing on data from two different projects, Wendy Carr considers the perspectives of newcomer students and parents in relation to the reason they pursue or encourage the pursuit of proficiency in French. Using interviews and questionnaires, Carr is able to show that the notion of language as 'social capital', as promoted by Bourdieu (1977) in particular, remains at the forefront of the reasons for which newcomer families favor French study in the province of British Columbia. Multilingualism is viewed in a very favorable light by the participants in her research, who convey that developing skills in French, beyond their skills in English, is an important part of the establishment of a Canadian identity. These findings actually mirror some of the reasons for which British Columbia promotes the development of skills in English and French for its newcomers in official policy documents.

Finally, Jordana Garbati's contribution offers a new path in the research, examining temporary residence students in French as a second language (FSL) programs in Canada. Her case study focuses on an international student who is in Canada temporarily, specifically for the purpose of advancing his English skills to be well positioned for post-secondary education. Many provinces of Canada offer such programs for international students, and to date, previous research on English learners in FSL have considered students who are permanent immigrants to Canada. Garbati's research provides insight into the influences and beliefs that may be at work when an international student here to learn English is required to also pursue French study. The notion of 'relevance' is a key focus in the chapter, as it becomes clear that the student and several key stakeholders question the value of FSL study for a temporary resident not intending to remain in Canada after a year. Garbati's study also shines a light on potential gaps in FSL teachers' knowledge bases about how best to support English learners in the French classroom.

Maintenance of Their Heritage Languages and Cultures

The changes in Canada's demographics over the last 40 years have also underscored the importance of providing the means for a multilingual population to maintain their languages of origin/heritage. Although language maintenance for immigrants and their families has remained, for the most part, outside of mainstream education in Canada, the large number of immigrants has illuminated the urgency to enhance the means by which education can support the maintenance of their language of origin.

Martin Guardado and Ava Becker bring together data from several research projects to explore how Spanish-speaking immigrants to Canada have maintained and deepened their linguistic and cultural ties to their communities. Working with immigrants to British Columbia and Alberta in these projects, Guardado and Becker seek to understand how the participants leveraged their membership in grassroots community organizations to shape their linguistic and cultural identities and incorporate their heritages into their life in Canada, with a particular focus on members of the second generation. As immigrant families become established Canadian families, the ideas explored in Guardado and Becker's chapter provide insight into how heritage languages and cultures may come to be viewed within their communities over time, when less knowledge of the culture of the home country is available to its members. They also consider the nature and goals of the community organizations and how their infrastructures come to shape (or not) the views of its members. Overall, the chapter provides important insights into how some newcomers transition between their old lives and cultural roles in their home country and their new existence in Canada.

Kimberly Noels' chapter touches on themes of identity, in her review of research considering the motivations of individuals who have heritage language connections to German. Through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Noels contends that motivations to study German for heritage speakers depend on how much they view knowledge and proficiency in the language as critical to their sense of self. Even with the challenge created by a lack of a true census of German heritage language programs throughout Canada, Noels has successfully mined existing research on Canadian students of German to explore the motivational influences for language study. Finding evidence of motivations from the intrinsic to the extrinsic, from the personal to the professional, Noels is also able to consider how the context of the language study experience also comes to play a role in how students of German come to shape their identities. Such

insight is helpful in guiding future heritage language programs for German, which is seeing both a decline and aging of its speakers in Canada.

Finally, Patricia Duff and Duanduan Li consider the experiences of heritage language speakers and learners with Chinese backgrounds. Their work begins by outlining some of the challenges with researching Chinese heritage language speakers and communities in Canada, particularly the fact that there are multiple Chinese languages and cultural traditions linked to different communities from the same home country. As part of the chapter, they consider the way in which Chinese language study for individuals with a Chinese heritage has been positioned within Canada, drawing comparisons not only with programs for Francophones and members of Aboriginal communities, but also with the United States, which also has a large population of heritage speakers of Chinese. The review comes to focus on three particular themes within the field: how children are socialized and supported in their study of Chinese through family connections and access to literacy resources; motivation and identity issues for younger learners of Chinese as a heritage language; and needed directions in future professional development and research endeavors.

Individuals with Disabilities and Second Language Study

Over the last 40 years, there has been a slow philosophical shift in how individuals with disabilities and difficulties are viewed within Canadian society, leading up to the past decade where 'inclusion' has been a primary focus. In the same time period, as often as French immersion has been labeled 'successful', it has also been labeled 'elitist', since its student population has most often been characterized by high-achieving students with strong linguistic skills; students not fitting this profile have often been excluded from French immersion study or transferred out of the program upon encountering difficulties. Because French immersion has been 'the' program for FSL study in Canada, the principles and practices that have defined its existence carry a lot of influence over popular beliefs about who should study French at all, regardless of the program.

Currently, students who have been previously excluded or otherwise discouraged from FSL study in Canada are now populating classrooms in larger numbers than ever before because of the aforementioned changing views about disability. However, FSL programs are still wrestling with a legacy of exclusion, born in the French immersion programs. For inclusive teaching to gain widespread support in FSL programs in Canada, the three chapters