

**Maeve Conrick and Vera Regan: French in Canada: Language Issues, Modern French Identities, vol. 28**  
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**Wim Remysen**

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According to the 2006 census, French is the mother tongue of approximately 22% of all Canadians. Given the prevalence of English, not only in demographic terms, but also in terms of prestige, French Canadians not surprisingly have felt the need to protect and promote the use of their language. In this volume, Maeve Conrick and Vera Regan address a number of language planning issues related to the French fact in Canada.

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the presence of French in Canada, which goes back to the beginning of the 17th century as the French established two separate colonies in North America, New France and Acadia. The loss of these establishments to the English during the 18th century resulted in frequent tensions between the English and the French, despite the recognition of some language rights for the latter. Moreover, as Canada gradually took its actual form, the percentage of native French speakers diminished progressively, thus explaining the rise of French Canadian nationalism and, more recently, of Quebec nationalism. Unfortunately, the authors do not explain the presence of some important French minorities in the western provinces, who joined the Canadian Confederation more recently.

From the 1960s onwards, rising tensions between English and French Canadians have encouraged both federal and provincial governments to implement measures in order to correct certain inequalities between the use of both languages. Chapter 2 deals with language policy at the federal level and examines how Canada seeks to reinforce the status of French by adopting official bilingualism (Official Languages Act 1969). The authors fail to point that, unlike other multilingual countries (e.g. Belgium or Switzerland), Canada does not recognize separate linguistic areas within its boundaries. In theory, this means that citizens have the right to claim

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W. Remysen (✉)

Département de langues, linguistique et traduction, Faculté des lettres, Université Laval, Pavillon Charles-De Koninck, bureau 2225, Québec (Québec), Canada G1K 7P4  
e-mail: wim.remysen.1@ulaval.ca

services provided by the federal government in the language of their choice regardless of the province they live in.

Chapter 3 focuses on the way Canada's most populous francophone province seeks to protect and promote the use of French. The recognition of French as the only official language of Quebec (Charter of the French language 1977) has consolidated the use of French in various domains (administration, health and social services, trade commerce, public signage and education), but it has also caused considerable discontent among anglophone Quebecers, who often consider the Charter too coercitive and irreconcilable with federal bilingualism. Even though the authors consider French as a distinctive feature of the identity of most Quebecers, they neglect to point out that Quebec also pursues the promotion of a national identity by means of language.

The impact of language policy on Canada's demographic linguistic situation is examined in Chapter 4. The authors discuss the results of the 2001 census which provides data on Canadians' mother tongue(s), the language(s) they use at home and at work, and their knowledge of both official languages. These results clearly indicate that, despite federal legislation, Canada is far from being an overall bilingual country since the position of French outside Quebec remains vulnerable. Quebec language policy, on the contrary, has been more successful: French is now the predominant language at work in the province and more and more Quebec allophones shift to French rather than to English.

One of the most acclaimed measures of federal language policy is the implementation of immersion programs in which students partly receive their education in a second language. Different existing types of immersion education as well as their outcome are discussed in Chapter 5. Although the authors examine the long-term effects these programs have on individual bilingualism, they do not mention the effects that immersion education has on the more general level of collective bilingualism. Indeed, the success of such programs seems to be in contradiction with the fact that bilingualism remains weak outside Quebec, as the authors demonstrate in the previous chapter, but this aspect is not addressed.

Chapter 6 mentions some phenomena that result from the contact between French and English, including code switching and borrowing, but one has to bear in mind that these do not apply to all francophone communities to the same extent. Furthermore, some of the most salient features of Acadian and Quebec French (QF), the two main varieties of Canadian French, are presented. Some of the features that are mentioned for QF are nevertheless obsolescent (e.g. *fleur* "flour") or not widespread in all registers (e.g. *garrocher* "to throw" is mostly found in informal registers, whereas *fin de semaine* "weekend" belongs to standard QF), but this is not systematically indicated. In addition, some features presented as common to all Canadians are in fact not used in QF (e.g. the interrogative marker *tu* is used instead of *ti* in QF). Given the fact that this volume concentrates on language policy, one might also expect to learn more about the extent to which Quebec promotes the existence of QF, but this is in fact not the case.

All in all, this volume provides an interesting introduction to some of the most significant aspects of language policy in Canada. However, it fails to provide an in-depth analysis of how the status of French is conceived by the different

authorities. For instance, the authors do not stress the main distinctions in the conception of language policy at the federal and provincial levels (the former is based on bilingualism and multiculturalism whereas the latter is grounded in unilingualism and interculturalism), nor do they mention the most important criticisms or shortcomings regarding Canadian language policy. Moreover, as recent censuses indicate that the future of French largely depends on the language choice of immigrants, it would have been interesting had the authors examined how language policy, especially in Quebec, tries to encourage the latter to adopt French rather than English as a second language (for all these aspects, see Molinaro 2005; Oakes and Warren 2007). Furthermore, since this volume deals with the position of French in Canada as a whole, one might also expect a chapter on provincial language policy outside Quebec, especially in New Brunswick, which is the only official bilingual province in the country. Finally, the discussion would have benefited further from a consideration of the main challenges facing Canada and Quebec in their attempts to consolidate the status of French in the 21st century.

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## Author Biography

**Wim Remysen** is currently a PhD student in French linguistics at Laval University, Quebec City. His research interests include variationist linguistics and discourse on language, especially with regard to the French language in Quebec. In his PhD dissertation, he analyses how particularities of Quebec French have been evaluated in various language columns during the 19th and 20th centuries.