

Reading 3:

In C. Paulston (ed.) *International Handbook of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1988.

The Canadian Second Language Immersion Program

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Canada is a relatively young nation, founded in 1867, with a population of approximately 25 million citizens who inhabit a territory that is second in size only to the USSR. The country has a federal form of government consisting of ten provincial legislatures, two territorial legislatures, and one national parliament located in Ottawa. Political power is highly decentralized, with the provincial government holding considerable legislative and political power in certain jurisdictions, including, for example, education, health care, and municipal affairs, and the federal government holding powers in other jurisdictions.

There are three founding groups — Native peoples (including the Inuit or Eskimos and Indians), the French, and the English. These groups differ greatly with respect to their population size, geographical distribution, and social and economic power. It is not certain when the Native people arrived in North America, although it was probably during prehistoric times and possibly during the last Great Ice Age. The Inuit have traditionally inhabited the northern regions, and the Indians the more southern parts of the country. Since confederation in 1867, the Native peoples have comprised a small and diminishing percentage of the total Canadian population (see Table 1, and Barnaby (1988)). They have no separate, elected political representation; they vote in elections in the same way as other Canadian citizens. Matters of special relevance to them are dealt with by the Federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

Canadians of British and French origin constitute by far the largest ethnic groups in Canada, with those of British origin being more numerous (40 percent) than those of French origin (27 percent). French and English Canadians are unequally distributed across the country. This is

most notable in the case of French Canadians who reside mainly in Quebec, northern New Brunswick, the eastern border of Ontario, and southern Manitoba. English Canadians constitute a large percentage of the population in all regions of the country with the one exception of Quebec where they make up only 17 to 20 percent of the population. It is clear from Table 1 that even Canadians of British or French origin are slowly diminishing in numerical importance as a result of a rise in the number of non-English, non-French immigrants. It is estimated that there are some seventy-eight different cultural groups in Canada. They constitute approximately 33 percent of the total population.

The historical and social significance of French and English along with the growing importance and recognition of ethnic diversity in Canada are two of the most salient features of Canadian culture. Indeed, in contrast to the notion of a cultural 'melting pot' in the United States, Canada has been characterized as an 'ethnic mosaic'. In recognition of these characteristics of Canadian society, the federal government has adopted official policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism. According to the Official Languages Act, passed in 1969:

The English and French languages are the official languages of Canada for all purposes of the Parliament and Government of Canada, and possess and enjoy equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada (Section 2).

This means that Canadians have access to services provided by the federal Parliament or government in English or in French anywhere in Canada. The Act does not require that all Cana-

Table 1 Ethnic origin of the Canadian population, 1901 to 1971

Origin	1901 (%)	1921 (%)	1941 (%)	1961 (%)	1971 (%)
British	57.0	55.4	49.7	43.8	44.6
French	30.7	27.9	30.3	30.4	28.7
Indian and Eskimo	2.4	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.3
German	5.8	3.4	4.0	5.8	6.1
Italian	0.2	0.8	1.0	2.5	3.4
Dutch	0.6	1.3	1.9	2.4	1.9
Polish	0.1	0.6	1.5	1.8	1.4
Scandinavian	0.6	1.9	2.1	2.1	1.8
Ukrainian	0.1	1.2	2.7	2.6	2.2
Other	2.5	6.2	5.7	7.4	8.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Book IV, p. 248.

dians be bilingual, but rather only that government employees dispensing federal government services are required to be bilingual. This type of bilingualism is referred to as institutional bilingualism.

The multiculturalism policy adopted in 1971 is designed:

to encourage and assist within the framework of Canada's official languages policy and in the spirit of existing human rights codes, the full realization of the multicultural nature of Canadian society through programs which promote the preservation and sharing of ethnocultural heritages and which facilitate mutual appreciation and understanding among all Canadians.

Part of the multiculturalism program is concerned with the maintenance and development of heritage languages, including languages other than French, English, or Native peoples' languages. This is a relatively recent aspect of multiculturalism, and to date relatively little has been accomplished (for reviews of this work see Cummins, 1983; and O'Bryan, Reitz & Kuplowska, 1976).

The remainder of this chapter will focus on French-English bilingualism and particularly on bilingual education programs oriented toward teaching English-speaking children French. Reference will also be made to bilingual programs that teach nonofficial languages, such as Hebrew and Ukrainian, to English-speaking children. In general, then, the focus will be on bilingual

education for majority English-language children. The reader is referred to Chapter 7 in this volume for a review of educational programs designed for Inuit and Indian children.

A Brief Sociolinguistic History of English-French Relations

Like many parts of the New World, Canada was settled and governed by different European nations during its early development. The first colonization of Canada was undertaken by the French beginning with Jacques Cartier's landing in Canada in 1534. French control gave way to British control in 1763 when the British defeated the French at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham near Quebec City (Cook, Saywell & Ricker, 1977). French Canadian culture was deeply rooted in North America at the time of the British conquest. Thus, it resisted the assimilationist effects of British legislation and immigration policy which would have eroded the vitality of a less entrenched ethnolinguistic group.

The British North America Act of 1867 legally constituted the Canadian confederation, which at the time consisted of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Analogous to the American Declaration of Independence, the BNA Act, as it is usually referred to, affirmed Canada's linguistic duality only in Quebec, where the use of both the French and English languages was required in the Parliament and Courts of the province. It was not until 1969, with the passage of the Official Languages Act, as described earlier, that both languages were actually accorded status as official languages nationwide. Accord-

ing to Canadian bilingualism policy, federal government services throughout the country must be made available in both French and English. This policy does not apply to services provided by Canada's ten provincial governments or the two territorial governments in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. At the provincial level, only one province, New Brunswick, also recognizes French and English as official languages. The remaining nine provinces are monolingual, with eight recognizing English and one, the Province of Quebec, recognizing French as the official language. Despite the lack of official status for both English and French in most of the provinces, certain provincial government services are now available in both languages in most provinces. There is an increasing move in this direction. The official language policies of the provincial governments tend to reflect their respective constituencies. Thus, the one officially bilingual province, New Brunswick, has a sizable percentage of both French-speaking and English-speaking residents; Quebec, which recognizes French as the only official language, is inhabited predominantly by French-speaking residents; and the remaining eight provinces, which all recognize English as the official provincial language, have predominantly English-speaking residents.

Notwithstanding regional differences in the prevalence of English and French, in general the English and French languages are important features of Canadian life. Consequently, competence in both English and French is an important means of communication in Canadian political, cultural, and economic affairs, and bilingual competence is often associated with tangible and/or intangible rewards. The reward value associated with English-French bilingualism is enhanced by the international status and utility of English and French, be it in diplomatic, economic, or cultural spheres. Notwithstanding the historical importance of the French and English cultures in the early development of Canada, the federal government recognizes neither as official cultures. As already noted, Canada has adopted an official policy of multiculturalism which recognizes the legitimacy and value of all cultures represented among its citizenry.

The Quiet Revolution

Despite its historical importance during the early colonization and subsequent development of Canada; despite its contemporary status as an

official national language; despite its demographic significance as the native language of approximately 25 percent of the Canadian population; and despite even its international status as a major world language, French has until recently been the disadvantaged partner in Canadian confederation.¹ This has been true to a large extent even in the Province of Quebec where the vast majority of the population speak French as a native language (viz., some 80 percent in a total population of 6 million); indeed, many Quebecers speak only French. Evidence of the inferior status of French can be found in at least three areas: (1) legislation, (2) patterns of language use, and (3) language attitudes.

Legislation and the French language

As has already been noted, French is recognized as an official language by only two of Canada's ten provinces (namely, Quebec and New Brunswick) and by neither territorial government. While the eight 'English provinces' do not presently recognize French as an official provincial language, they do not forbid its use. The legislative picture was not always so tolerant. The use of French, particularly in public schools, has been forbidden by law in certain provinces at certain periods during the years since confederation. For example, in 1890 the government of the Province of Manitoba revoked an earlier law requiring the use of French in the provincial Parliament and permitting its use in public schools. Students caught using French in school by the authorities could be physically punished. The 1890 law has since been repealed, and political efforts are being made to restore French to its original status. According to the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), public education will be available in all provinces in both official languages, where numbers warrant.

Patterns of language use

Widespread daily use of French, except in communication with official federal government agencies, is limited to the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick and to other specific regions with sizable French-speaking communities (e.g. the Ontario-Quebec border, Northern Alberta, and parts of Ontario). Even in these areas, however, English often predominates over French as the *lingua franca*. This is particularly true in public settings and in business and commerce. In an extensive study of the language of work in Quebec in 1972, J. D. Gendron notes that:

In the province of Quebec itself, French remains basically a marginal language, since non-French-speaking persons have little need of it and many French-speaking people use English as much as and sometimes more than their mother tongue for important work. This applies even though Quebec's French-speaking people constitute a vast majority both in the labor force and in the overall population. (p. 108)

This means that 'in interrelationships in mixed conversation groups, English-speaking persons concede much less to French than do French-speaking persons to English' (p. 93). Thus, 'the burden of bilingualism is unequally distributed between French- and English-speaking people, both as regards the degree of competence in the other language and the language demands on a worker during the course of his career' (p. 94).

Language attitudes

Perhaps no other single piece of evidence attests to the disadvantaged or inferior status that the French language has had relative to the English language than the results of a study carried out by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum (1960). In what has become a classic study in the social psychology of language, Lambert and his colleagues asked groups of English and French Canadians in Montreal to listen to and give their impressions of people speaking either French or English. Unknown to the listeners, they were actually hearing the same perfectly bilingual individuals on separate occasions, sometimes speaking French and sometimes English. Analyses of the listener's reactions to the speakers indicated that they were much more favorable toward the English 'guises' than toward the French 'guises'. In other words, the same speakers were perceived significantly differently when heard using each of their two languages — it is as if they were two different people. Furthermore, it was found that not only did English Canadians form more favorable impressions of the English guises than the French guises, evidence of in-group favoritism, but so did French Canadians. That is, even the French Canadian subjects perceived the speakers more favorably when they spoke in English than when they spoke in French, even though this meant denigrating members of their own ethnolinguistic group.

Subsequent research has substantiated these

findings (d'Anglejan & Tucker, 1973) and further indicates that the tendency for French Canadians to denigrate members of their own group is not manifest by children before the age of twelve but emerges around adolescence (Anisfeld & Lambert, 1964) and thus appears to be a socially learned phenomenon (see Day, 1982, for a recent review of similar research). Lambert has interpreted these results to mean that language can act as an important symbol of ethnolinguistic group membership, and that members of ethnic minority groups may internalize the negative stereotypes of their group that members of the majority group often have.

Discontent over these linguistic and cultural inequities had been developing for some time, particularly in Quebec. Early attempts by the French-speaking community to arrive at a more equitable relationship with the English community through negotiation had been largely unsuccessful. Repeatedly faced with an apparent lack of responsiveness on the part of the English community to their concerns, French-speaking Quebecers began to make vocal and public demands for change. This culminated in the early 1960s with concerted political, social, and, in some cases, militant actions to bring about change. There were, for example, mass demonstrations against public institutions that would or could not communicate with French-speaking Quebecers in French. The social unrest manifested during this period has come to be called the Quiet Revolution.

During the last twenty years, some Quebec politicians have called for separation from the rest of Canada. A political party whose avowed intentions are to seek Quebec's separation from Canada was elected as the provincial government in 1976. One of the most important pieces of legislation which this government passed after taking office was a law declaring French the only official language of the province. This law then assures the linguistic rights of the majority French-speaking citizens of Quebec. Some analysts believe that a 1978 referendum by this same government seeking support for Quebec's separation from Canada failed because of the reassurance that this law gave the French population that their language would be respected and safeguarded.

The St Lambert Experiment: A Community Experiment in Social Change

At the same time that the French community in

Quebec was expressing dissatisfaction with inequities in the language situation, some English-speaking Quebecers began to grow more concerned about English-French relations. More specifically there was an emerging awareness in the English community, precipitated by events of the Quiet Revolution, that French was becoming an important language of communication in most spheres of life in Quebec and, concomitantly, that English alone would no longer assure social and economic success in the province. The coexistence of French and English Canadians has been characterized by Canadian novelist Hugh MacLennan (1945) as *two solitudes*, an apt metaphor in this and many other communities inhabited by people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Faced with the evolving importance of French as the main working language of Quebec and with an increasing dissatisfaction with the linguistic barriers that separated English and French Canadians, a concerned group of English-speaking parents in the small suburban community of St Lambert, outside of Montreal, began to meet informally in the early 1960s to discuss the situation (Lambert & Tucker, 1972).

They felt that their incompetence in French contributed to, and indeed was attributable in part to, the two solitudes that effectively prevented them from learning French informally from their French-speaking neighbors. They felt that their inability to communicate in French was also attributable to inadequate methods of second-language instruction in English schools. At that time, French was taught for relatively short periods each day (twenty to thirty minutes) by teachers who were usually native English-speakers with competence in French-as-a-second-language that varied from excellent to poor. There was an emphasis on teaching vocabulary and grammar rules and on using pattern practice drills based on then popular audiolingual techniques. This approach was common to many second-language programs throughout North America which retain some of the same characteristics even to this day. Unlike second-language instruction in other parts of North America, however, second-language instruction in Quebec began in elementary school and continued systematically until the end of secondary school. This is still true, and it has become customary to varying degrees in the other Canadian provinces.

Despite twelve years of second-language

instruction, however, students graduating from the public schools of Quebec were inadequately prepared to deal with the demands of using a second language in diverse real-life situations. As one of the group of twelve St Lambert parents who spearheaded interest in alternative methods of second-language instruction pointed out:

Children were graduating from English Protestant schools in this province with little more knowledge of French than their parents had had, despite claims that the programs had been considerably improved over the years. Their knowledge was not perceptibly superior to that of graduates from the English provinces of Canada and was not sufficient to enable the students to communicate with their French-Canadian neighbors. The parents felt their children were being short-changed and should have the opportunity to become 'bilingual' within the school system, since it was so difficult to achieve this skill outside of school. (Melikoff in Lambert & Tucker, 1972: 220)

Most of the St Lambert parents who participated in these discussions could attest to the failure of second-language instruction, using their own experiences as evidence.

In their search for better methods of second-language instruction for their children, the St Lambert Bilingual School Study Group, as they came to call themselves, sought the assistance and advice of experts within their community. In particular, they consulted with Dr Wallace E. Lambert of the Psychology Department, McGill University, who had conducted research on social psychological and cognitive aspects of bilingualism, and with Dr Wilder Penfield of the Montreal Neurological Institute, McGill, who had conducted research on brain mechanisms underlying language functions. The involvement of these two scholars was indeed fortunate because not only did they give their overall support to the parents' project, but their professional advice shaped the new program in some important ways.

The efforts of the St Lambert group finally succeeded, with the school district agreeing to set up an experimental kindergarten immersion class in September 1965, some two years after their first meetings. In her description of events leading up to 1965, Olga Melikoff notes that school officials did not accept the experimental class

because of any conviction that it was a worthwhile educational experiment, but rather because public pressure on them was too great to ignore. She characterizes the official school district attitude as follows: 'You asked for it, if it doesn't work, it's not our fault' (p. 227). 'At no time would the Board undertake to accept the experiment for more than a year at a time' (p. 233). Despite a lack of official support from the school authorities, parents were surprisingly enthusiastic — registration for the experimental kindergarten class 'opened one spring day at 1 p.m., and by 1:05 p.m. the quota of 26 children was reached' (p. 226).

The process of community involvement that has just been described has been repeated many times since the first immersion class was opened in St Lambert in 1965. The introduction of French immersion programs in most school districts elsewhere in Quebec and Canada has been instigated and promoted by local community groups, along with the assistance of individual school district officials and researchers. Official support has customarily been lukewarm at the outset. Parents have continued to play an important role in the evolution of immersion programs, as evidenced by the establishment of Canadian Parents for French, a voluntary, nonprofit association of English-speaking parents who seek to improve the quality of second-language instruction in public schools across Canada.

It was in the educational system, and in French immersion in particular, that the St Lambert parents sought a response to important sociolinguistic changes that were taking place around them. Moreover, it was through educational innovation that they also sought to bring about social change within their own communities. Improved French-second-language learning was not intended to be the sole goal of immersion. Rather, it was intended to be an intermediate goal leading to improved relationships between English and French Quebecers and thus ultimately to a breaking down of the two solitudes that had become unacceptable.

St Lambert: An Experiment in Bilingual Education

The St Lambert French immersion program that was inaugurated in September 1965 was designed to achieve the following primary goals:

- (1) To provide the participating children with functional competence in both written and spoken aspects of French.
- (2) To promote and maintain normal levels of English-language development.
- (3) To ensure achievement in academic subjects commensurate with the students' ability and grade level.
- (4) To instill in the students an understanding and appreciation of French Canadians, their language and culture, without detracting in any way from the students' identity with and appreciation for English Canadian culture. These goals are shared by most immersion programs across Canada in essentially the same form.

The program in St Lambert was an *early total immersion* program. That is, all curriculum instruction, beginning in kindergarten (five years of age) and continuing through the primary grades, was taught through French, although it is common for the children themselves to use English with one another and the teacher during kindergarten. (See Figure 1 for a schematic summary of the early total immersion program.) At first, French was to be used as the only medium of instruction until the end of grade three; this was later altered so that only kindergarten and grade one were taught entirely in French. When English was introduced into the curriculum, it was used to teach English-language arts, for approximately one hour per day. Instruction through English was subsequently expanded in successive grades to include other subjects, such as math or science. By grade six, or the end of elementary school, 60 percent of the curriculum was taught in English and 40 percent in French. This was usually implemented by teaching through English during the morning and through French during the afternoon of each day and always with native speakers of English and French, respectively. This basic pattern is characteristic of many current early total immersion programs, although there are, of course, variations among programs. For example, early immersion programs offered elsewhere delay the introduction of English until grade three or even grade four or limit the amount of exposure to English once it is introduced (see Genesee, 1983, for a review). Some important variations will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. Follow-up to the early immersion years is often provided at the secondary school level by offering a number of selected courses in French. These may be either language arts or other subject courses such as geography or history. The particular courses and number of such courses that students take at

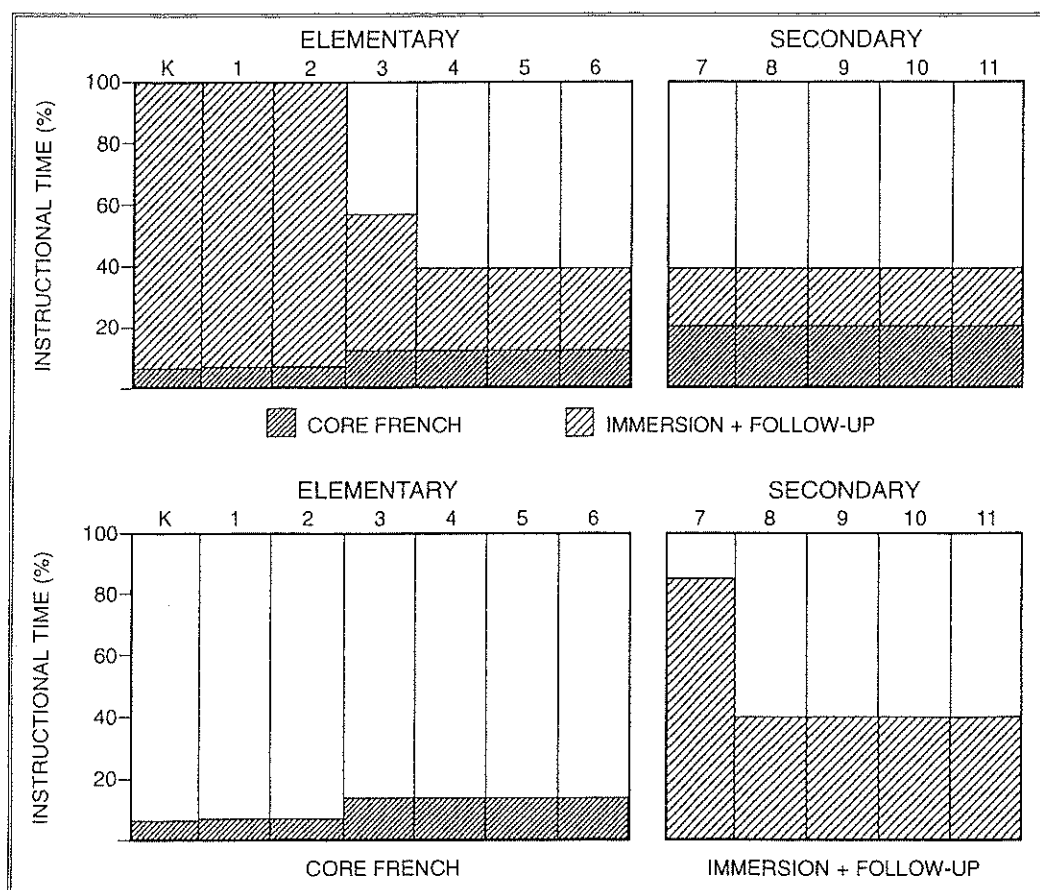


Figure 1 Schematic representation of an early total immersion and one-year-late immersion program

this level are a matter of individual student choice.

The most distinctive feature of the St Lambert immersion program was its use of the second language to teach regular academic subjects, such as mathematics, science, and social studies, in addition to language arts. This is one of the distinctive characteristics of all immersion programs. Immersion teachers teach regular school subjects using French much as they would if their pupils were native speakers of the language. The same subject matter is never taught in the same school year using both English and French. Formal instruction in the grammatical rules of French is presented in the French-language arts class, which constitutes a large part of the primary grades, as does English in the case of a regular English program. Clearly, however, the

children are not native speakers, and so the teachers emphasize oral-aural communication skills during kindergarten and the first half of grade one. Reading, writing, and other literacy skills are introduced slowly and only when it is felt that the children have acquired the corresponding oral/aural language skills. The children are not required to use French with the teacher or with one another until the second half of grade one. In fact, the children commonly use English among themselves and with the teacher during this stage.

Generally, immersion programs are designed to create the same kinds of conditions that occur during first-language learning; namely, there is an emphasis on creating a desire by the student to learn the language in order to engage in meaningful and interesting communication

(Macnamara, 1973; Terrell, 1981). Thus, language learning in immersion is incidental to learning about mathematics, the sciences, the community, and one another. This stands in sharp contrast to more traditional methods of second-language instruction where the emphasis is on the conscious learning of the elements and rules of language for their own sake. Moreover, the immersion program is designed to allow the student to apply his or her 'natural language learning' or cognitive abilities as a means of learning the language. It is now generally accepted that first-language acquisition in children is a systematic process that reflects the child's active cognitive attempts to formulate linguistic rules that correspond to adult competence in the language. This process is called creative construction (Dulay & Burt, 1978; Slobin, 1973). According to this conceptualization, opportunities to communicate in the language are advantageous for learning, and 'errors' are a normal and important part of the learning process. The immersion approach permits the learner to progress according to his or her own rate and style, again in much the same way that first-language learners do (Bloom, Hood & Lightbown, 1974; Nelson, 1981).

Another distinctive pedagogical feature of the Canadian immersion program is the use of monolingual language models and 'linguistic territories' within the school. The French teachers in the immersion programs present themselves to the students as monolingual French speakers, even though in most cases these teachers are very competent in English. The French teachers in kindergarten and grade one especially must know enough English to understand the students whose comments are initially all in English. Many of the students learn about their French teachers' bilinguality only in the later grades when they overhear them using English with an English teacher. The classrooms in which French and English instruction are presented are kept as distinct as possible. This means that the children usually change classrooms for the French and English parts of the school day once English is introduced into the curriculum. An explicit rule to use French in the French classroom and with the French teachers is established. These two strategies — the use of monolingual second-language teacher models and the establishment of French territories within the school — have been adopted and are observed very conscientiously in order to facilitate the students'

second-language learning by encouraging, indeed requiring, their use of the second language. Otherwise, there would be a natural tendency for the students to use English, their stronger language.

The Spread of Immersion: The Present Situation

Since the St Lambert experiment began, immersion has expanded dramatically. Immersion programs are now available in several different forms, in a variety of languages, and in all Canadian provinces and the territories. The number of students enrolled in immersion increased from approximately 17,763 in 1976 to 102,168 in 1982 (Stern, 1984). Participation in immersion programs is voluntary, and to date the majority of programs serve children from 'middle-class' socioeconomic backgrounds. The alternative forms of immersion currently available differ primarily with respect to the grade level(s) during which the second language is used as a major medium of curriculum instruction. Differentiations are often made between (1) early, (2) delayed, and (3) late immersion. A secondary basis of differentiation is made according to the amount of instruction provided in the second language (*viz.*, total versus partial) and/or the number of years during which the second language is used as a major medium of instruction. Excluded from this rough taxonomy are (1) second-language programs in which the second language is used for teaching language arts only and one non-language subject and (2) programs in which the second language is never used to teach at least 50 percent of the curriculum during any school year. These latter types of programs would generally be regarded as enriched second-language programs.

Early Immersion

There are two main types of early immersion: total and partial. The early total immersion program has already been described in the section on the St Lambert Experiment and is schematically represented in Figure 1. The early partial immersion program differs in that less than 100 percent of curriculum instruction during the primary grades (kindergarten, one, two, and three) is presented through the second language. The most common formula is 50 percent French/50 percent English. The amount of French instruction in early partial immersion programs tends to remain constant throughout the elementary

grades, in contrast to total immersion programs in which the French component decreases. Another difference between these two types of immersion is the sequencing of literacy instruction. In total immersion programs, literacy training in the native language occurs after literacy training in the second language has begun. In partial immersion programs, literacy training tends to occur in both languages simultaneously from grade one on.

Among early total immersion alternatives, the main variation involves the grade level at which English instruction is introduced — it may be grade two, as in St Lambert, grade three, or grade four. Another variation among early total immersion options is the amount of instruction presented through English once it is introduced into the curriculum. In some cases, English exposure increases quickly, for example, from 20 percent in grade three to 60 percent in grade five. In other cases, it increases very slowly (for example, remaining stable at 20 percent during grades three, four, and five).

Delayed immersion

Immersion programs that postpone use of the second language as a major medium of instruction until the middle elementary grades (i.e. four or five) are classified here as delayed. These programs usually offer a core second-language course of twenty to forty-five minutes a day in the primary grades prior to the immersion component which may be of one or two years duration (see Cziko, Holobow & Lambert, 1977, for an example). This may then be followed by partial immersion until the end of elementary school, during which language arts and other subject material are taught through the second language. In the delayed immersion, option training in first-language literacy precedes training in second-language literacy.

Late immersion

Late immersion programs postpone intensive use of the second language until the end of elementary school or the beginning of secondary school (Figure 1). In *one-year* late immersion programs, all or most of the curriculum, except English-language arts, is taught through the second language for one year (see, for example, Genesee, Polich & Stanley, 1977). In *two-year* late immersion programs, this schedule is repeated for two consecutive years (see Genesee 1981). Late immersion programs may be preceded by

core second-language instruction throughout the elementary grades, or they may be preceded by special preparatory second-language courses one or two years immediately prior to immersion (see Swain, 1978). Most late immersion options — one-year/two-year and with/without prior core second-language instruction — are usually followed in the higher grades by advanced second-language arts courses and, in some cases by selected nonlanguage courses, such as geography that are taught through the second language.

Double immersion

By far the most common alternative forms of immersion, as just described, involve the use of a single second language. Genesee and Lambert have investigated variations of immersion for majority English-speaking children in which two nonnative languages (French and Hebrew) are used as major media of curriculum instruction during the elementary grades (see Genesee & Lambert, 1983). French and Hebrew were selected as immersion languages in the program in question because both have sociocultural significance for the participants but for different reasons. On the one hand, French, being one of the official languages of Canada, has social and economic relevance to these children and their families on a day-to-day basis. In this regard, the Hebrew-French double immersion programs are the same as the St Lambert program and other French immersion programs for majority language children in Canada. On the other hand Hebrew is valued because of its religious and cultural significance and because of its increasing nonsectarian importance as a national language of Israel. In this respect, the Hebrew-French double immersion programs differ from French only immersion in being heritage language or language revitalization programs. The underlying principles of both programs are nevertheless the same, and, in particular, their success is predicated on the participation of children who are members of the majority language group.

In one type of double immersion program studied by Genesee and Lambert, English speaking children from Montreal received all their curriculum instruction during the primary grades in French and Hebrew. The French curriculum comprised language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Hebrew curriculum comprised language arts, history, and religious and cultural studies. Native French- and

Hebrew-speaking teachers were used to teach each curriculum. English was not introduced until grade three in the case of one school and grade four in the case of another. We have referred to this alternative as *early double immersion*. In contrast, in another double immersion program English along with French and Hebrew were used as media of instruction from kindergarten on. This program alternative has been referred to as *delayed double immersion* because the amount of exposure to French increased systematically from five hours per week in grade one to twelve hours per week in grades five and six. Instruction through English decreased somewhat from twelve hours per week in grade one to nine hours per week in grade six as a result. Exposure to Hebrew changed insignificantly.

These programs are described in some detail here because they represent effective and feasible models of multilingual/multicultural education of possible interest to ethnolinguistic groups who are interested in revitalizing heritage language and at the same time wish to acquire competence in an additional second language of some local or national relevance. Examples other than Hebrew-French immersion for English children come to mind. For example, Ukrainian Canadians in western Canada might wish to have their children, who in most cases have become Anglicized, acquire competence in Ukrainian while also learning Canada's other official language, French.

Research Findings

The extension of immersion programs to all the Canadian provinces and its evolution to include alternative forms is attributable in no small measure to the research component that has accompanied the development of immersion from the beginning. Several large-scale longitudinal evaluations have been set up in a number of Canadian centers to monitor the effectiveness of immersion programs in these locations. They include the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal evaluations (Genesee, 1983), the Bilingual Education Project, OISE (Swain & Lapkin, 1982), the Ottawa Board of Education Project (Stern *et al.*, 1976), and the British Columbia French Project (Shapson & Day, 1980), as well as the St Lambert Experiment (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). The results of these evaluations provide a comprehensive and reliable indication of the linguistic and academic outcomes of immersion. The findings reviewed here pertain to students

from middle socioeconomic backgrounds because they constitute the majority of participants (see Genesee, 1976b, for a discussion of the suitability of immersion for all children).

In brief, assessment of the English literacy skills (e.g. reading, spelling, writing) of early total immersion students has revealed that during the primary grades when no instruction in English is provided, they are usually behind their peers who have been in an all-English program. This is not surprising in view of the students' lack of training in English literacy. What is surprising is their ability to take English-language tests and complete them reasonably well despite a lack of such training. Quite likely, this is possible because the immersion students are able to transfer skills they have been taught in French to English, a language they already know well in its aural and oral forms. In other words, they do not have to learn to read and write in English from the beginning once they have acquired these skills in French. During the same grades, early total immersion students demonstrate no deficits in listening comprehension, aural decoding, or oral communication. A study by Genesee, Tucker & Lambert (1975) found that in interpersonal communication early total immersion students were more sensitive to the communicative needs of their listeners than were nonimmersion students. The lag in English literacy that the immersion students experience during the primary grades is eliminated as soon as English-language instruction is introduced into the curriculum. Evaluation of different immersion variants has shown that this catch-up occurs at the end of one year of having received English-language arts instruction whether English is delayed until grades two, three, or four. This has also been found to be the case in double immersion programs (Genesee & Lambert 1983). Furthermore, follow-up assessments in higher grades have revealed that there are no long-term advantages to introducing English instruction into the curriculum earlier (e.g. grade two) rather than later (e.g. grade four). Genesee & Lambert (1983) found that the use of English as a medium of instruction from kindergarten on in double immersion programs appears to inhibit second-language acquisition. Typically, early partial immersion programs, which use English 50 percent of the time and French 50 percent of the time, result in equivalent levels of English-language development as early total immersion programs. It has been found that students in delayed and late immersion programs

also develop normal levels of English-language proficiency and experience no lags whatsoever.

The expansion of immersion programs shortly after their inauguration in 1965 raised concerns about the effectiveness of such an approach for children with low levels of academic or intellectual ability and for children who had relatively low levels of English-language development. In a series of studies, Genesee (1978) examined the English-language development of immersion students with low academic ability in comparison with that of similar students in all-English programs. Academic ability was assessed using IQ tests. He found that below-average students in immersion achieved the same levels of proficiency in English reading, spelling, vocabulary, and writing as below-average students in the English program. In other words, below-average students were not handicapped by the immersion experience as many had expected. M. Bruck (1982) has reported similar results for immersion children who were considered 'language disabled' in English in comparison with similarly disabled children in the English stream.

Immersion students have been shown to achieve higher levels of proficiency in all aspects of French, including reading, writing, listening comprehension, and oral communication, than students receiving core French-language instruction. This is to be expected in view of the considerably greater exposure to French provided by immersion. Research by Genesee (1976a) has found that below-average students in early immersion programs cannot be distinguished from their above-average peers by native French-speaking evaluators who are asked to subjectively assess their oral production and listening comprehension skills. In contrast, above-average immersion students usually outperform below-average students on tests that assess literacy and academic achievement, for example, reading comprehension and mathematics. Comparisons of the French-language proficiency of immersion students with that of native French-speaking students has indicated that immersion students achieve very high levels of communicative ability but that their proficiency is not native-like even by the end of six or seven years.

The results of academic achievement testing have shown that immersion students achieve the same levels of academic proficiency in math and science, for example, as English control students who have been receiving all academic instruction in English.

Finally, investigations regarding some of the social psychological aspects of immersion indicate that the participating students develop the same identity with and positive attitudes toward the English Canadian culture and language as do students attending English-language program (Genesee, 1984). The attitudes of immersion students toward French Canadians tend to be more positive than those of nonimmersion students during the early years of the program and then come to resemble those of their nonimmersion compatriots in later years. It is possible that lack of ongoing contact with French Canadians may account for this developmental shift. Immersion students generally indicate a willingness to use French when called upon to do so. Students in Montreal, for example, report using French in face-to-face encounters much more often than do nonimmersion students. At the same time, there is evidence that immersion students do not actively seek out contact with French Canadian or opportunities to use French. They also express reservations about using French at the expense of English. It seems quite likely that some of these feelings stem from conflicts between French and English Canadians in society at large. Notwithstanding such reservations and conflict immersion students express positive attitudes toward learning French in the immersion programs. Many of their comments indicate that they are in favor of more French, especially during the follow-up years. In contrast, nonimmersion students express relatively negative attitudes toward their French program and toward learning French in general.

Taken together, these findings indicate that immersion programs are suitable for children with diverse learning and language characteristics provided they are members of a majority language group, such as English Canadians. The suitability of immersion programs for children from minority language groups is an open question, subject to empirical investigation. In a review of research on the effectiveness of immersion programs for all children, Genesee (1976b) concluded that 'the results from the existing research are generally inconclusive on the suitability of...immersion for minority group children' (p. 510). Only one study pertinent to this issue was available at that time. There has been no research progress since then. Proponents of second-language immersion programs for majority English-speaking children have generally doubted their applicability for children from

minority language backgrounds who do not enjoy the same individual or social respect that English speakers in North America enjoy (Hernández-Chávez, 1984). In Canada, English immersion programs for French speaking Canadians have not been recommended because this form of education poses a wide-scale threat to French in North America. That is, too much English too soon could undermine the vitality of French. The important point here is that the implementation of specific forms of bilingual education must take into account the sociocultural context in which schooling takes place.

Summary

Immersion programs were first instituted in the Province of Quebec, Canada, in the mid-1960s. They were developed in reaction to particular sociocultural events in the province at the time, and they were designed to respond to the needs and characteristics of a specific group of children. Since the original St Lambert project, immersion has become a relatively widespread and commonplace form of education in the Canadian public school system. The results of numerous longitudinal scientific evaluations have consistently indicated that majority English-language children participating in these programs do not experience any long-term deficits in native-language development or academic achievement. At the same time, they achieve functional competence in the second language that is markedly better than that of students in core second-language programs. Although not truly native-like in all aspects, the second-language skills of immersion students are rated very highly even by native speakers of the language. Since immersion programs in Canada are optional, these results necessarily pertain to students who have chosen or whose parents have chosen on their behalf to attend the program instead of regular English schools.

The documented success of the Canadian immersion programs depends on a combination of pedagogical practices, as outlined earlier, as well as certain sociocultural conditions. The major sociocultural conditions include the following: (1) the participating children speak the

language of the majority in North America, that is, English; (2) educational, teaching, and administrative personnel working in immersion programs value and support, directly or indirectly, the children's home language and culture; (3) the participating children and their parents similarly value their home language and culture and do not wish to forsake either; and (4) acquisition of the second language is regarded by all concerned as a positive addition to the child's repertoire of skills. Thus, the success of immersion is more than simply a question of when to use students' first and second languages for instructional purposes. It is equally dependent on an understanding of the sociocultural conditions in which the students are raised and educated.

Interest in immersion from both pedagogical and linguistic perspectives continues as researchers continue to explore the suitability of immersion for all children. Genesee and Lambert, for example, are currently examining its effectiveness for black as well as white children from inner-city neighborhoods in US school districts. Previous research has focused largely on middle-class, white children. An experimental early total immersion program in Mohawk, an Amerindian language, is currently underway for Indian children who do not speak Mohawk but rather have learned English as a native language. A systematic evaluation of this project is planned by Genesee and Lambert as well. Researchers are beginning to address important issues concerning teaching approaches in immersion classes (Swain, 1984) and the relationship between inter-group relations in society at large and relations between English and French Canadian teachers in immersion schools (Cleghorn & Genesee, 1984). The findings from these studies will help to expand our already rich understanding of the immersion approach to bilingual education.

Note

1. Discussion of the social and political events that preceded the emergence of French immersion in 1965 focuses on issues pertaining to language and English-French relations. This coverage is necessarily simplified and is not intended to reflect a complete or unbiased interpretation of history.

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