Language AND SOCIETY

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Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus...

Language AND SOCIETY

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NOTICE

Language and Society analyses Canadians' concerns from the linguistic point of view and emphasizes the personal, national and international advantages of being a two-language country.
Letters to the Editor, with the writer's name, address and telephone number, are welcome.
The Editor reserves the right to publish letters, which may be condensed.

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COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
CANADA
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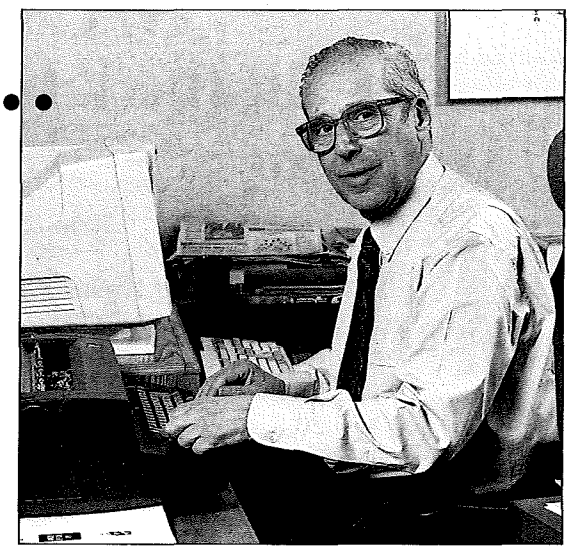
Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus...



That's the good news.

The bad news is that he's only for children.

Those of us who are no longer children (alas!) know that even the good things in life must be paid for.

The question is: Are we getting value for money?

When it comes to a widely misunderstood program such as Canada's two-language policy, the argument is often obscured by misleading allegations about the cost to the taxpayer. They speak well for the imaginations of their authors, but not for their accuracy.

Here is a basic fact. In 1992-93 "bilingualism" (stretching the term to include all possible expenses) was estimated to cost the federal taxpayer about 650 million dollars.

That is a large sum of money, but it is nowhere near the yearly billions opponents of "bilingualism" advance as the "true cost".

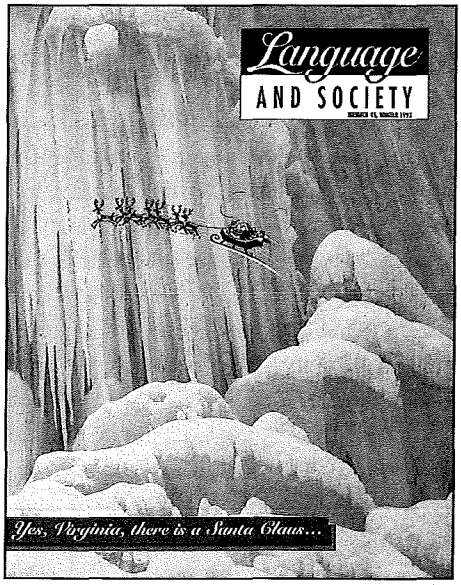
About 260 million dollars, or 40%, are transfer payments to the provinces and territories for language programs, programs directly responsible for preparing Canadian students for the future. Should this area of education be ignored completely? Or, should the federal government simply shrug off such costs to other levels of government, disingenuously claiming that way to have saved tax dollars?

Oscar Wilde said that a cynic was someone who knew the cost of everything, and the value of nothing. When the cost of providing two-language services to Canadians is measured, we must evaluate the social costs of not being fair to all Canadians. In dealing with any social issue, you cannot separate the question of cost from the question of fairness.

Yes, the Canadian two-language policy carries a price. Fairness carries a price. What would opponents of Canada's two-language policy substitute for the fairness that allows the federal government to reach the largest possible number of Canadians — 98.6% — by using our two languages *where it is necessary and feasible to do so*?

Mark Twain said that it isn't what people don't know that hurts them. It's what they do know that isn't so that does the harm.

Victor C. Goldbloom



The Commissioner and his staff wish you all the best for the holiday season and the new year.

SANTA CLAUS...
in the language of your choice!

*GILLES LAFRAMBOISE**

Who is the Canadian best known abroad?

If you said Wayne Gretzky or Céline Dion, you would be quite wrong. It is Santa Claus, the legendary figure responsible for distributing gifts to children on Christmas Eve.

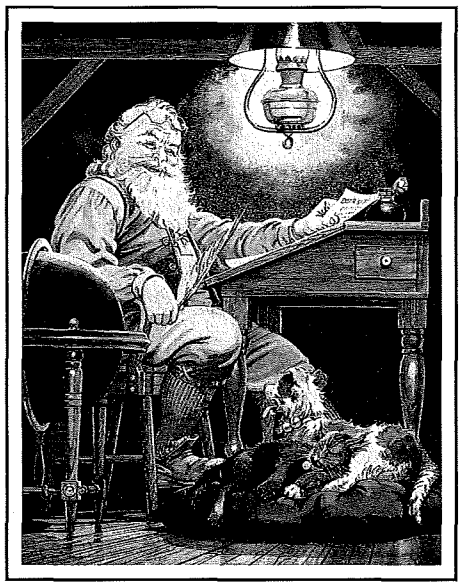
As everyone knows, this humble Canadian has set up his headquarters at the North Pole, at the very limit of a land of ice and snow. He comes down south only during the holiday season to visit his little friends and to hand out gifts to all those who have been good.

This story is so well known that each year more than a million children all over the world write to Santa Claus, in Canada, so that he will not forget them on December 25. Naturally, the kindly old fellow and his elves call on some 10,000 employees and former employees of Canada Post to answer the mountains of letters from five continents.

In the language of your choice

According to Canada Post's Jim Phillips, "Santa Claus makes a point of answering children in the language of their choice." When you are Santa Claus, that language might be one of the two official languages, English and French, or Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Vietnamese, Braille, German, Greek, Inuktitut, Japanese, Romanian, Czech or Lithuanian. Seventeen languages in all!

When Canada Post cannot find volunteers within its ranks able to answer children in their own language it calls on the services of an elf from outside so as not



to disappoint the foreign correspondent writing to the most famous inhabitant of our North Pole.

Launched in Montreal in 1973, the Santa Claus letters program was extended across the country in 1983. This year, to mark the 10th anniversary of the national program, Canada Post has decided to publish a bilingual collection of some of the best letters received in 1992.

According to Jim Phillips, the letters program supports the Crown corporation's efforts in the area of literacy, among others. Assigning Santa Claus his own postal code (H0H 0H0) also promotes the use of proper addresses.

How many letters will Santa Claus receive this year? That is difficult to answer Canada Post's Phillips explains, because the reaction of children often depends on the moods of their elders.

Thus, when Lithuania broke away from the former Soviet Union and children in the new country saw their first Santa Claus parade (in Toronto) on television, more than 15,000 letters from Lithuania reached Canada in a few weeks.

"We have noticed that children living where war or political instability is rampant tend to confide more in Santa Claus," Phillips says. "That was the case with children in the former East Germany a few years ago and in Sarajevo more recently."

More than one Santa Claus?

Canada Post is not alone in coming to the aid of Santa Claus during the holiday season. How would you expect him to respond to the hundreds of invitations that he receives? How can he sit enthroned in dozens of shopping centres at the same time? If he manages to do this, it is thanks to people like Henri Paquet.

Thirty-three years ago the Montreal accountant founded the Association des Pères Noël de la province de Québec, not only to give Saint Nick a hand but also to fill a niche ignored by many. The little

association is now part of the Service de promotion et de publicité de Montréal Inc., which includes a number of associations and employs nearly a hundred people all year round.

The group prepares exhibitions and provides printed material, musicians and hosts. It also makes set decorations and kiosks, costumes, masks and wigs and "rents" figures such as Santa Claus, the Good Fairy, Asterix and Obelix, the Flintstones, Yogi Bear and even the Ninja Turtles.

"In a region like Montreal," Paquet says, "you quickly realize that Santa Claus must be bilingual." He has made bilingualism a condition of employment, just like height and weight.

"It's not up to the children to speak Santa Claus' language, it's up to Santa Claus to speak to children in their language," he says. According to this expert everything happens in the first seconds. "If Santa Claus does not quickly recognize the child's language," Paquet explains, "the child becomes withdrawn and may begin to cry because he does not understand." Accordingly, the firms directed by Paquet also give "Santa Claus courses" to prevent unpleasant situations.

In addition, so as not to disappoint his clientele, Paquet ensures that the Santa Claus he assigns to the shopping centre in an Italian neighbourhood of Montreal speaks French, English and Italian. In another neighbourhood, his Santa Claus speaks French, English and Portuguese. "I even hired a black Santa Claus for the Haitian community in Montreal when they asked me to," he adds. ■

(Our translation)

*** Gilles Laframboise is a freelance writer.**

Dear Santa Claus

This collection is available in many bookstores and at some postal outlets, or contact:

The National Philatelic Centre
Canada Post Corporation
Station 1
Antigonish, Nova Scotia
B2G 2R8

1-800-565-4362

Photo: Peter Walton/Superstock

The ninth BILCOM prize was awarded October 23 at the 18th congress of the Association des gens de l'air du Québec, held in Sainte-Foy.

BILCOM Prize

The BILCOM prize is awarded to those who, in the course of their careers, have contributed significantly to expanding the use of French in Quebec aeronautical circles.

This year's recipient is Yvan Miville-Deschênes. This air traffic controller, who has 25 years of service, had taken part in the simulation exercises in connection with the study of bilingual communications (BILCOM) in the late 1970s. This study inspired the conclusions of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Bilingual Air Traffic Services in Quebec. Mr. Miville-Deschênes' talents as a scientific popularizer on radio and television are well known in the Quebec City area.

Astronaut Marc Garneau received the prize in 1985.

A proposal to combat ignorance

GILLES LAFRAMBOISE

No more than five days after the recent federal election, the group known as Dialogue Canada organized a national meeting to promote co-operation among all Canadians.

According to Jeff Graham, president of the national organization, the election results should not be seen as discouraging. On the contrary, they confirm that it is urgent to break down the walls of misunderstanding that have developed between Canadians. "In our view, Canada's problems arise in large part from a lack of communications between the various parts of the country," Graham explains.

In the opinion of the group he heads, most Canadians are still prepared to reach a consensus in a spirit of mutual respect for differences. That is why Dialogue Canada recently proposed that the federal political parties launch "a continuing program to help Canadians to know and understand their country and each other to a greater degree."

According to Graham, "the time has come for all federal political parties to recognize the continuing responsibility of the federal government to sponsor non-partisan, objective programs of information and exchange, not to proselytize or convert the people, but to allow Canadians to make their political decisions and their contributions with a fuller understanding of each other and the nature of their society."

The document given to the political parties states: "In a sense, it is a miracle that Canadians have worked relatively peacefully together without any consistent programs for explaining Canadians to Canadians — especially in the face of provincial control of education and American domination of the mass media."

Dialogue Canada believes that this may be explained by the fact that most Canadians were able to live their lives in their own isolated corners while relying on major national projects and the political elites to promote their common interests. Today, however, trends are going in the opposite direction, as the federal election reminded us.

The agency cites as examples the changing trade patterns and government policies that have eroded the many linkages traditionally provided by the media, means of transportation and common institutions.

"Delinking," according to the group's document, "will be increased by the new American satellite TV transmissions.... Canadians will have even greater difficulty in seeing or hearing themselves, even during national political, sports, cultural, or economic events."

It is disappointing to have to note here that during the recent World Series CTV broadcast not only the images from the American CBS network, but also the descriptions by that network's commentators. Blue Jays' fans, whether nationalists or not, had to resign themselves to seeing their heroes through the good offices of an American network, even though half the games were played in the Skydome in Toronto.

Knowing Canada

Dialogue Canada notes that at present there is no "official and continuing" pan-Canadian program designed to help Canadians to know their society and become acquainted with one another.

The "Knowing Canada" program would be designed to promote and administer federal government programs as well as support projects in the private sector. It would have two aims: to help Canadians learn more about Canada and its institutions and to assist the various elements that make up Canadian society to achieve better mutual understanding.

The program would have two institutional divisions, one operating in the Canadian Heritage Department and the second serving as a funding agency to support private initiatives. According to Dialogue Canada, these initiatives might include exchanges, contests, educational projects and communications and media programs.

The Canadian Heritage Department might be responsible for support for Canadian studies, research on the extent of Canadians' knowledge of their country and its institutions, the promotion of national symbols and events and the possible establishment of an association for young people.

If Dialogue Canada's initiative receives the endorsement of the new federal government, the funding agency would be established as a Crown corporation reporting to Parliament. It would be independent and neutral, with a statutory funding base.

The document given to the political parties several months before the election states: "[The] objectives would be to respond to initiatives from the private, voluntary and co-operative sectors on an independent, non-partisan basis."

In addition to funding projects, the agency, in co-operation with Canadian Heritage, would provide an ongoing assessment of Canadians' knowledge of their society.

"...it is late to take action, but it is never too late if we want to solve once and for all the real problems that exist, problems arising from ignorance and misinformation."

Where will the money come from?

In this era of "belt-tightening", the funding of such a program will raise questions. Dialogue Canada proposes that the budget for "Knowing Canada" be fixed as a percentage of the total amount spent on education in Canada.

"We propose that funding be in the range of 0.05 per cent of the money Canada spends on education, yielding an investment of approximately $25 million which would be split between [Canadian Heritage] and the Knowing Canada Funding Agency."

For the president of Dialogue Canada, Jeff Graham, "it is late to take action, but it is never too late if we want to solve once and for all the real problems that exist, problems arising from ignorance and misinformation." ■

(Our translation)

THE ASSURANCE of intuition

DANIÈLE LETOCHA*

In her incisive and witty autobiography, *The italics are mine* (1991), Nina Berberova recounts her literary discussions with Vladimir Nabokov. "Basically, for men like him, belonging to a particular nationality or language does not play an essential role," she comments. In his case, and those of Strindberg, Wilde, Conrad and Santayana — and I would add Julien Green and Jack Kerouac to her list — she sees "a new cultural phenomenon" emerging: the fact that they sometimes, if not always, write in a language other than their own. She concludes: "For Kafka, Joyce, Ionesco, Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges and Nabokov, the mother tongue has lost the narrowly national meaning that it had eighty or a hundred years ago."

But is this a loss or a gain? That depends on which end of the telescope one is looking through: that of the original or that of the adopted language. In a brilliant essay published in *Time* last spring, Pico Iyer, himself a voluntary exile, surveys the renaissance of English literature owed to writers on the periphery (especially Indians and West Indians) for whom English is a second or third language. He draws attention to the novel richness, eloquence and colour of their writings and also illustrates their forceful impact on British writers challenged by this unexpected eruption.

Should we conclude from this that, in our global village, the relationship of speakers to their mother tongue has now lost its special character? This, in my opinion, would be a mistake. For, while Berberova and Iyer have identified a major phenomenon, it is one that is still primarily a literary rather than an anthropological fact. This aesthetic development intrigues them precisely because it seems to violate the laws of our modern cultural history. Modernism is indeed the issue: was not Latin the vehicle for nearly all of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance?

It would be naive to think that the degradation of the relationship to the mother tongue in Quebec is an absolutely unique and exceptional case.

I will borrow from Fernand Dumont's model to distinguish two registers here: first, that of the primary culture, common and received as a cultural given, to which the mother tongue belongs and which roots us in a more or less coherent collective symbolic world; then, that of the second culture, constructed and personal, expressing the internal ruptures and stresses characteristic of critical freedom. Literature, like any formal creation, belongs to the realm of the second culture, that of "cultivated" people, while the intuitive relationship to the mother tongue exists at the very foundation of the primary culture, as an anthropological given unifying the cultural field. The difference is clear: everyone has a mother tongue, but not everyone produces literary works. The relationship to the mother tongue nevertheless has an effect (through complex mediations that may include a change of language) on access to the world of creation. Two postulates govern my reading: first, in cultural matters, it is as difficult to preserve as to innovate; second, the pathologies of the mother tongue hinder the ability to create.

The issue of quality

The vitality of the mother tongue is not revealed by raw statistics. Expansion in this case is not necessarily evidence of health. I will discuss solely the qualitative aspect, during our own century, in order to make some personal observations on the pathologies of the relationship to the mother tongue. Obviously, it is impossible for me to remove my professor's spectacles, those of a professor teaching in French and English in a bilingual faculty. My half-glasses, however, allow me to glimpse, by raising my eyes, something else in a different way. Let us steer clear, first of all, of the illusion of a lost "golden age" to be restored. The solutions to our problems are to be found in the present, if they are to be found anywhere.

I believe that our situation is unprecedented in several respects. Never before has the state of the mother tongue of such a large segment of the population

* **Danièle Letocha has published some 30 studies on Bodin, Machiavelli, La Boétie, Modrevius and others in connection with a theory of political modernism in the West. She is an associate professor in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ottawa. She has taught in Quebec, Ontario and France.**

of the so-called advanced countries been known or measured. This is the result of longer and broader-based education. This means that we can no longer count on an educated elite transmitting to its children, through the family, specific linguistic abilities on which university education relied. Has public education replaced these mechanisms? Can it do so? I do not believe that decreeing an additional hour of French per week in French schools, forbidding the use of English in the schoolyard or issuing official terminological directives can *eliminate* permissiveness in the spoken or written language of a population. It was correct to say, in this specific and external sense, that it is unrealistic to legislate about people's language. What, then, is the teacher to do who is assigned a class where most of the pupils have various mother tongues foreign to the host school? The great migrations are also affecting Western Europe, and such cases occur frequently in Villeurbaine and Marseille, London and Stuttgart. And what becomes of French, English and German children whose mother tongue is the national language in these same classes?

Below a certain threshold of lexical mastery it is impossible to divine the meaning of an unknown term from the context, which is itself unclear.

Clearly, it would be naive to think that the degradation of the relationship to the mother tongue in Quebec is an absolutely unique and exceptional case. My experience with Anglophone undergraduate university students has convinced me of their profound and systemic linguistic deficiencies, although they take a different form from those of their French-speaking counterparts. These include problems in identifying levels of language and using anything but a very impoverished, familiar, oral style; in marking the importance of a word stylistically (instead of emphasizing it mechanically) and in understanding the meaning of "required" readings; finally, they seem incapable of doing anything more than assembling a haphazard collection of quotations related to the topic. I discovered how lost Anglophone students feel when I announced that there was no textbook in my course; in other words, they had to understand and take notes on lectures that they could not simply parrot back on an examination. I hear similar comments from my Italian, Belgian, French and Scottish colleagues. Concern about the poverty of the linguistic resources of students in their mother tongue has become widespread. And yet, I am well aware that most of ours have learned to master a new language: that of computers, in which they are competent and take pleasure. Can it be that the problem is inherent in using a mother tongue?

An old story?

As early as 1917, Jules Fournier, a cousin of my grandmother, harshly criticized, in his two letters on "La langue française au Canada", the work of the same title that Louvigny de Montigny (a cousin of my grandfather and a confirmed pedant) had published the previous year on the problems of our mother tongue and ways to rectify them. These were three in number: personal vigilance, the reading of great authors and practice in so-called self-correction exercises. The editorial writer Fournier fulminated against such naivete. In language worthy of Voltaire, he undertook to show that using one's mother tongue is not like using a watch that runs well or poorly and whose mechanical parts can be changed as required. Fournier started from the principle that we are here in the *realm of being* rather than the *realm of having* and that there are thresholds of linguistic awareness: it is necessary, he said, to have attained a certain threshold of quality in order to be aware of the problem. It is awareness of one's self, of one's honour and one's "race" (the word then used to mean culture) that is sick. Too quickly reducing the socio-linguistic aspect to the individual scale, he pleaded that the presence of English, by itself, did not explain the linguistic carelessness and lack of concern of French Canadians. It was attitude that was important: the determination to take oneself in hand and exercise self-discipline, individually and then collectively. Bloatedness, spinelessness, laziness, sluggishness — these were the culprits. Fournier thus takes us to the anthropological side of the primary culture. He gives this cultural pathology a name: it is the sickness of the *approximate*.

For the average student, the grammatical standard appears vaguely terroristic.

What sickness?

What exactly is this sickness? For one, like me, who is not a professional linguist, what are the symptoms of incompetence in one's mother tongue? Let us speak of the majority of Francophone students whom I know, in first year of university, and take first of all a descriptive approach to two types of problems: lexical and syntactic. There is a deficiency, hesitation and impoverishment in the basic lexical function, that of naming the outside world to make it intelligible and tame it: a linguistic world that can be lived in through intuition. This active

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appropriation, when it succeeds, also tames the interior world so as to introduce into it, not order, but *an* order.

The university has become a glorified secondary school. It fills in the gaps, reduces knowledge to a popular level and then washes its hands.

The range of vocabulary observable in the classroom, in my office and in written work is very limited and usage is erroneous. Orally, the speakers give the impression of hesitating, of repeating themselves, of coming up against a wall. They switch words two or three times, as if speaking a second language. Frequently, they abandon what they were saying and try to find emotional support by appealing to an imaginary intersubjectivity: the familiar, "you know what I mean?" Communication is strained, difficult, as soon as one can no longer rely on the fellow-feeling of companions. In short, the affective component becomes overloaded when lexical mastery is deficient. I am not speaking here of stylistic nuances. I am not concerned essentially with the inability to choose between connotations of the type *fat, plump, pudgy, bloated, obese,* etc. I am speaking simply of identifying the neutral denotation, an isolated and restricted semantic cell: the *mot juste*. When spoken to, the students are often mystified. They take current, careful and correct usage for a level of technical language, to such an extent do the words of their own language seem exotic to them. Below a certain threshold of lexical mastery it is impossible to divine the meaning of an unknown term from the context, which is itself unclear. The dictionary can do almost nothing for such students. And how can they understand comments such as "inappropriate", "vague", "pleonasm", "repetitive", or "irrelevant" written on their work? I will say nothing about lexical Anglicisms; it is all too familiar a subject.

Even before considering the interference of intersubjective communication, the question of recognition of oneself arises acutely. Inability to take ownership of the words of one's mother tongue denies access to the organization of perception, that is, to the organization of meaning that any language effects and which results in one's thinking in Sintô or Hungarian, Swahili or Greek. As a rule, the categories, concepts and images bind with the words with an immediacy and obviousness that exists only in the relationship to the mother tongue. This is the assurance of intuition. Pathology in the sense in which I am using it means the situation where the words are not interiorized by the speaker like a personal power: they remain at a distance, fugitive, unstable, obscure — enemies and, hence, strangers. The students experience the feeling of exile from their primary linguistic world. Either they decide to undertake the conquest of their language, a task that is extremely difficult when you are 18, or they remain imprisoned in insularity, in a state of undifferentiated subjectivity. Lexical incompetence leads to a kind of autistic behaviour. What is called individualism today conceals instead this paralysing abstraction.

Jean-Louis Roux, in an essay published in *Le Devoir* last summer, noted a curious kind of alienation. Some students —

THE CANADIAN LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGY INSITITUTE

*GEORGES ROCHON**

The Canadian Language Technology Institute was officially launched on October 1, 1993, on the campus of the University of Moncton. According to CLTI president Jean-Guy Haché the mission of this autonomous, non-profit organization is research, development and the application of technology that will one day allow computers to use human language to execute such tasks as recognition of speech and handwriting as well as their reproduction and translation or interpretation.

The creation of this national, leading-edge technology centre was made possible by a substantial contribution from the federal government via a major research and development program in communication technology. The Institute also benefits from substantial support provided by the University of Moncton, NBTel, the University of New Brunswick, the Treasury Board of Canada and the government of New Brunswick. In addition to the two universities and NBTel, Institute members are Assumption Life, IBM Canada, Government Services Canada, John Chandioux Consultants, Industry and

actors, Quebec Francophones — who had memorized a classical role could play it with real conviction and with perfect French diction. Yet they alternated between this language and an impoverished, monosyllabic, lame "joual" as soon as they stepped out of the role to speak to friends or the director during the rehearsal. "Are they bilingual in their own language?" Roux asked himself, intrigued by these gifted young people.

Lexical deficiency is accompanied by another kind of disconnectedness: syntactical incompetence. This involves the loss of rules for constructing a world of one's own based on general and conventional principles. Oral discourse can then only imitate simplistic, stereotypical and often erroneous forms that are as simple-minded as the linguistic environment being imitated. The billboards, media advertising, political slogans and even government messages that surround us and pester us are deliberately designed to reflect the common impoverishment and thereby allow the spectators to identify with the content. Thus is mediocrity consecrated and legitimized. The standard is nowhere to be seen.

I find in class that the level of abstraction where syntactical forms, that is, the relationships between words and clauses, take shape is not identified. Therefore, it cannot be mastered. For example, it becomes almost impossible to explain the difference between "ce que je me rappelle" (what I call to mind) and "ce dont je me souviens" (what I remember). The formal level where this distinction operates does not exist for the average students. The grammatical standard appears vaguely terroristic to them. They assume from the start that they are wrong and give up. Similarly, Anglophone students have often tried to prove to me that the subjunctive does not exist in English because they have never heard of it. It is clear that these speakers, on both sides of our linguistic duality, are barely equipped to deal with their mother tongue. That is why they flee from the complexity that syntax would make it possible to control and direct. On the one hand, they decode very well (passively, it is true) the visual syntax of comic strips; but, linguistically, in their imprecise world, everything is arbitrary and the arbitrariness of the teacher is added to the rest.

Not only is punctuation absent or random, but the simple logical connectors such as "in fact", "on the contrary", "however", "similarly", "thus", "as a result" and "also" quickly become threatening if they must be used to obtain a passing grade. The students strew them about at random. Written discourse clings desperately to the narrative mode punctuated by "then...then... then". These are very serious problems, especially when it is a question of using conjunctions, which alone create a rigorous and subtle logical perspective. Beyond the clarity of the words, syntax imposes critical distance and personal choices on the discourse. It operates on the discourse from within. It introduces *my* order. Let us insist on one point: in its specificity, the syntactical structure of any language is a coherent whole. The logic of French is not that of English. Without a mastery amounting to a "sense of the language", directly linked to its syntax, there is no defence against structural calques, so common among Francophones. As has often been noted, those who say, "L'homme que je travaille pour" are worse off than those who say, "J'ai un bon *coach*." Syntactical competence is the key to linear and cumulative thought capable of making connections between and qualifying experiences, even if it means looking back over one's mistakes. The sickness of the *approximate* is very serious because, in approximation, one makes

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Science Canada and Economic Development and Tourism New Brunswick.

A major portion of the Institute's activities will be operations oriented and will involve technology transfer, evaluating hardware and software, advocacy, innovation and acting as a clearing-house for technical information. The remainder will be focused on education and research towards the development of improved systems in partnership with other centres and organizations, both domestically and internationally. On the international scene, the CLTI has already secured agreements with research organizations in Japan, the United States and Europe.

The language technology niche is a component of the broader market resulting from widespread use of computer technology among the public. This broader market, conservatively estimated at $2,500,000,000 by the year 2000, includes the United States, Canada, Europe and the Asian Pacific Rim countries. The Canadian Language Institute will enable Canadian language industries to position themselves favourably to provide other Canadian product and service suppliers with efficient linguistic tools crucial to effective competition and communication in the world market. ■

(Our translation)

*** Georges Rochon is an Hull freelance writer and editor.**

no discernible or rectifiable mistakes; one does nothing at all. One does not think. The assurance of intuition has been lost. The primary culture does not accommodate itself to fragmentary usage. It requires the observance of strict rules.

Without this syntactical power over its own field of awareness the mind flounders in resemblance, below the threshold of distinguishing between the true and false, the acceptable and the unacceptable, the original and the ordinary. It can neither form nor give direction to a definite plan. The construction of personal identity is thereby compromised. And what one hears and reads are statements of the type, "Let's say that...", where the "I" is apparently absent. Consider the typical propositions where the vacant "I", the gregarious "we" and the impersonal "one" overlap in the grey area where identity is fluid, just like the mother tongue.

What are the consequences?

It seems to me that there is a truly new phenomenon in the conjunction of two losses: on the one hand, individuals remain below the threshold of self-correction in their mother tongue; on the other, the majority of a generation of students is linguistically unable to meet the requirements of scientific discourse. This double constraint has forced the institutions, the only place where organized corrective action is possible, to lower standards. It has been said and it is true: the university has become a glorified secondary school. But it is not doing the basic job of the secondary school. It fills in the gaps, reduces knowledge to a popular level and then washes its hands. May the better students succeed! As for the others, the devil take them! The disaffection for all types of formalism (linguistic forms are no exception) is growing. Incompetence in one's mother tongue reflects a weakening of the linguistic consensus and thus a specific type of dispossession.

Not everything depends on the school, however. The relationship to the mother tongue is so intimate that it is curiously allied to ethics. It is easy to see that we associate linguistic usage with ideas of responsibility and freedom. A hint of something like treason accompanies Nabokov, who wrote in American English. I can make students who accept an appalling level of language feel a vague sense of shame. Jean-Paul Desbiens did this eloquently in his famous *Les Insolences du Frère Untel* (1960)*.

We always attribute a sort of merit to the competent speaker and still greater merit to those who are masters of a second or third language.

Defending one's language, even a very debased one, can become a question of honour. One can feel personally humiliated when a bureaucrat mistreats it. This is because one's mother tongue is instrumental in ordering the various levels of the self. The challenge of mastery of a primary language lies in part in self-management. One discredits oneself by tolerating one's own incompetence because one thereby admits what one is and what one is worth. The expression "permissiveness" refers directly to the obligation to discipline oneself, to submit to a kind of vital, personal hygiene. *No institution* (not the family, the school, the media or the law) *can take the place of the will to structure one's identity and meet the other through the mother tongue*, if not other languages as well. That is why we always attribute a sort of merit to the competent speaker and still greater merit to those who are masters of a second or third language. This is what Jules Fournier saw clearly, and his indignation still interests me. I do not fail to challenge students about their nonsense when I believe them capable of responding methodically, but I entertain no illusions about the overall situation.

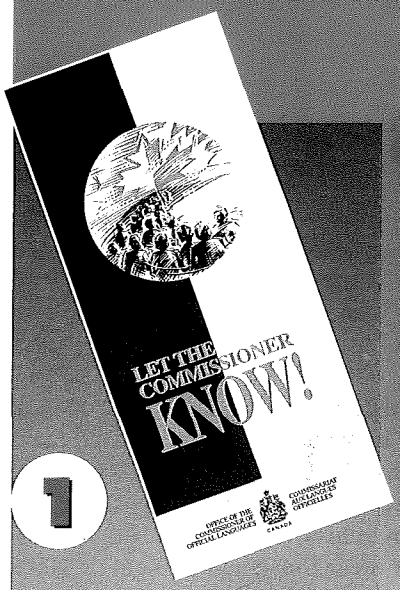
My students also seem to me to suffer from a special deficit that was unknown, even in popular circles, until about the 1960s. It is now very widespread and is a consequence of the shaky relationship to the mother tongue. Without the ease of the native speaker, usage is divorced from the playful functions of speaking and writing. Humour has disappeared, as has pleasure in the written word. Word games, which involve the poetic imagination, cannot mean anything to laborious readers. Since it requires mastery of the language, what I call the "eroticism" of discourse escapes them. This is a powerful reinforcement of formal training which is no longer operative. There is another consequence: the loss of basic skills in the mother tongue constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to the reading of works in the language's literary tradition.

Nearly all the experience of the French linguistic community belongs to the centuries of writing. The handicapped reader can no longer navigate through the varied landscape of the vision of the world conveyed by its language. If reading is the most powerful tool for enrichment and differentiation in improving the relationship to the language, how is it possible to escape from this vicious circle when contemporary trends discredit references to the past, place value on disjointed fragments of current information and vaunt projection into the future? In this context, the mother tongues, necessarily received from a past, are in process of losing something else: their relevance. ■

(Our translation)

* Translated by Miriam Chapin as *The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous*, 1962.

NEW PUBLICATIONS
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES



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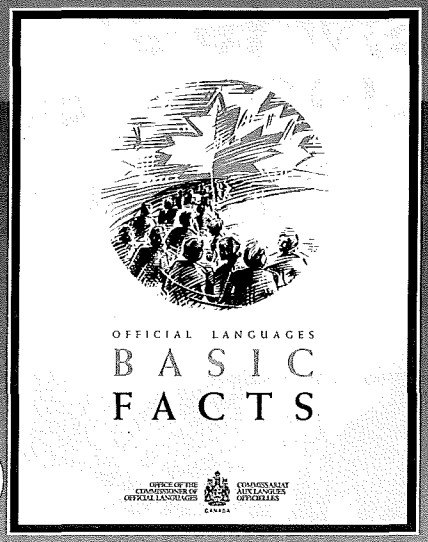

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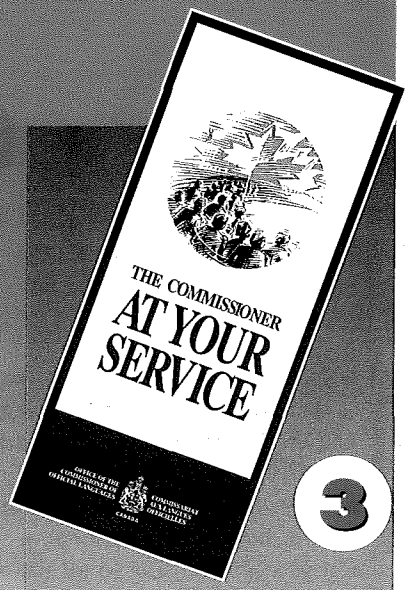

3

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Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
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How to avoid the shifting sands of language

JEAN FAHMY*

If there is one myth that our age has succeeded in burying once and for all it is the story that the French Academy, that venerable and unchallengeable body, meeting once a week, would give its blessing to all the words of the French language. If there was ever any truth to the myth the stunning acceleration of events and the undeniable advances in methods of communication have shattered it.

We live in a world in which speed is a virtue and on the continent where this virtue is practised most resolutely. Even in the area of language, at every moment, those who have access to some medium — print or, preferably, audio-visual — give free rein to their imaginations, and sometimes their laziness: innumerable words and expressions are created and circulated at lightning speed throughout our homes and offices.

It was quickly realized that the Tower of Babel might become home not only to many languages but also to various idioms of the same language. Hence, the need to introduce some order into this profusion. The federal government decided that, within its own sphere of activities, it needed to try to foster better relations, if not better understanding. The result was the creation of a Terminology and Language Standardization Program sponsored by what

was then the Department of the Secretary of State.

The Program, which is now administered by the Department of Government Services, has two complementary objectives. It patiently attempts to standardize terminology and linguistic usage among the departments and it attempts to disseminate and promote the use of the new terminology throughout the federal Public Service.

Since the program needed some structure, the Terminology and Language Standardization Board of Canada was established and set to work with determination in December 1992.

These somewhat cumbersome names and bureaucratic structures conceal a very simple reality. Let us look at a few examples.

Since the start of the Public Service of Canada reform known as PS 2000, the government's managers and employees have enjoyed considerable latitude in administering the expenditures of their units, in paying for the goods and services that they purchase, etc. Accordingly, they make massive use (like any citizen in his or her private life) of electronic means to conduct their financial transactions. They use payment cards, bank cards, credit cards, acquisition cards, etc.

Credit, debit, purchase, payment — it's enough to confuse anyone. Do these cards really have different purposes? Do their uses overlap? The Board's terminologists looked into the question and proposed definitions that appeared in the first Standardization Notice, circulated last September throughout the Public Service and beyond.

The Board is currently examining questions that are important to any employee of a federal institution who has to write documents, from a routine memorandum to a paper sent to the highest officials. When should capital letters be used in English? What are the different semantic fields of such terms as "First Nation", "Status Indians", "Registered Indians" and "Aboriginal Peoples", etc.?

How to define "Parliamentary appropriation", "budgetary expenditures", "budgetary revenues", "budgetary transaction", "cash in transit", "legislative authority", etc.?

This last example is particularly instructive. We all have a more or less clear understanding of the meaning of budgetary expenditures and budgetary revenues. Perhaps the Office of the Auditor General or the Treasury Board could prove to us, however, that this

* Jean Fahmy is Director of Liaison, Central Agencies, in OCOL's Policy Branch.

knowledge is imprecise or incomplete. There is a need for all of us, in this respect, to be on the same wavelength. The Terminology Board wants to determine the modulations of this wavelength down to their smallest variations.

The Board is no French Academy, but it has its work cut out for it. Its projects, for example, include the thorny question of feminizing titles in French. It is better to study it in depth, however, than to let solutions emerge willy-nilly, according to what is politically correct at the moment.

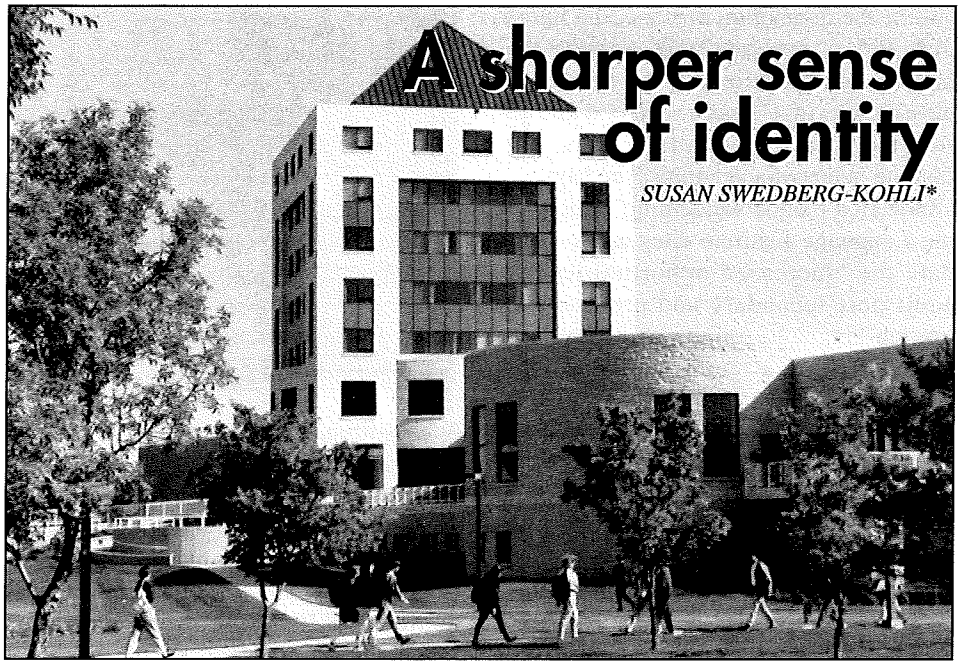
The Board's terminologists hope, quite modestly, to be of some small assistance in developing, amid the confusion that now reigns, tools that will produce more of that commodity so rare nowadays: clear and comprehensible communications and dialogue. ■

(Our translation)

NOTE

Readers who wish to obtain the texts of standardization notices and other information about the work of the Board may contact the Board's Secretariat at (819) 994-5943, or write to:

Government Services, Terminology and Linguistic Services Directorate, Planning and Standardization Division, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0M5.



A sharper sense of identity

*SUSAN SWEDBERG-KOHLI**

Entering the rotunda of the Language Institute at the University of Regina is a little like immersing in a French community nestled in the heartland of the Prairies.

French newspapers, including *Le Devoir*, *La Presse* and *Le Soleil*, are scattered on the low-slung tables. Popular French magazines peek out from beneath the journals lining the book shelves, *Les idées*, *Être Québécoise* and *Décormag*. French music pours from the mounted audio speakers and French video channels come on with the flick of a cable switch. The smell of fresh coffee mingles with the scents wafting from the nearby Café des Lys. Oversized windows overlook the grounds of the University campus and everywhere the murmur of French can be heard.

Since its inception in 1988 the Language Institute at the University of Regina has provided opportunities for post-secondary study and language training in French. "We serve both the Francophone and Anglophone population in promoting French language and French culture," explains Institute Director André Lalonde, "for one cannot be done without the other."

Lalonde, a Ph.D from Laval, accepted a position with the University's history department in 1965. He became involved with the University's Bilingual Centre and was later asked to head it, a reflection of his profound commitment to the preservation of the French language. "It fosters a sharper sense of identity," says Lalonde, moving his hand to his heart. "It's the heart and soul of who you are."

That commitment is entrenched in the programming provided by the Language Institute, including its baccalaureate, certificate and non-credit classes. The Institute also offers language training and professional development for Core French teachers, tutoring and educational outreach workshops. Summer programs are international in scope; French is one of 14 languages taught at the Institute.

A Bachelor of Arts in French-Canadian studies will begin by the fall of 1994, according to Lalonde. Though ⇨

*** Susan Swedberg-Kohli is a member of the first graduating class of the School of Journalism and Communications at the University of Regina. Her publication and broadcast credits include the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, *Canadian Living* and CBC Newsworld.**

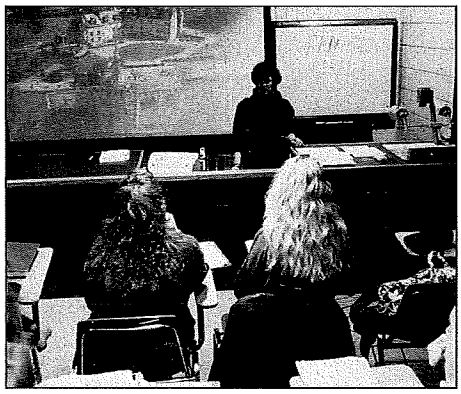
still in the development stage, the interdisciplinary program will examine the historic and social reality of Francophone culture in Canada. "We want to respond to the needs of students, not just the needs of academics," he says.

Indeed, a plaque welcoming visitors to the Language Institute cites as its mandate the "increased opportunities for adult post-secondary and professional French-language training and development for both French- and English-speaking residents of Saskatchewan."

"It's natural to want control over one's education system, but... one must have one's own university, which is not that realistic."

A strong cultural component is also part of the Institute's mandate. French theatre, concerts and community activities are frequently staged at the Institute. With pride, Lalonde refers to the workshop conducted by the renowned Saskatchewan sculptor, Joe Fafard. Entitled "What is French sculpture?", the Fafard lecture encourages the strong Francophone tradition that remains in Saskatchewan, says Lalonde.

It was a tradition seemingly at risk following the implementation of Bill 2, former Saskatchewan Premier Grant Devine's response to a 1988 Supreme Court decision. The Supreme Court ruled that the province contravened Article 110 of the North-West Territories Act, which technically made Saskatchewan a bilingual province. Bill 2 reversed that.



To soften the sting of Bill 2 Saskatchewan joined with the federal government to fund a Language Training Institute providing French language and development opportunities at the post-secondary level. Indeed, the pace at which the Institute progressed was breathtaking. The ink on the proposal was barely dry before ground was broken on the $10 million building, encompassing classrooms, language labs, community access rooms, cafeteria and residence.

Lalonde concedes that the 12-week span between the proposal's submission and its announcement is "rare" in academic circles. He is convinced that the value of the Institute is both real and symbolic. "It was the first new building on this campus since 1973," he says.

But the accelerated pace fuels criticism that the Institute does not truly reflect the needs of the community. "The Institute does many positive things," says Jean-Pierre Picard, spokesman for the umbrella network of Fransaskois associations, the Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan. "But we need more done to meet the needs of the Francophone community fully."

Picard believes the Fransaskois need more influence in determining the Institute's current programming and future directions. He says it could be a partnership similar to that in which representatives of the Aboriginal communities set policy for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, which is also housed on the University of Regina campus.

Lalonde does not dismiss the criticism but tempers it with references to economic realities and academic structures. "It's natural to want control over one's education system, but to have complete control one must have one's own university, which is not that realistic."

The last word belongs to the students.

Corinne Zerr, Sharon Thorsrud and Robert Topping are gathered around a table in the Institute's rotunda, sipping coffee, speaking French. They pause to accommodate a visitor's questions.

"I think it's like French immersion," says Corinne Zerr, who comes from rural Saskatchewan but has lived in Quebec. "You're surrounded by French here. We speak it in residence, the cafeteria, the rotunda, the library and even at our social functions. Some of the professors come from France, which really makes it seem like a French community."

Sharon Thorsrud, also from rural Saskatchewan, nods in agreement. Her considerable experience at the Language Institute prompts a respect for the Francophone commitment to culture. "I come from a Norwegian-Ukrainian background, and while we have traditions too there is not the commitment to them that Francophones have."

She pauses to gather her books for a last minute dash to class. "I think this is a great facility — especially for an Anglophone trying to learn French."

Robert Topping chimes in. "And for a Francophone wanting to keep his language, it's also good. Because if you don't use it, you lose it."

Topping is from Bellevue, a tiny French community about an hour's drive from Saskatoon. His family spoke French at home and participated actively in promoting their culture. Robert's decision to enrol at the Institute reflects the respect he has for that heritage and a commitment to expand upon it for the future. "As Francophones, we take pride in our culture and I wanted to know more about it. I think the Language Institute helps me do that." ■

Politics and my child's education NO THANKS!

*RUSS HUSUM**

Does the political climate influence parental decisions concerning their child's education? Ask Canadians about constitutional debate and they will almost certainly say that they are sick and tired of it; but does this negativism also manifest itself in parental attitudes towards having their children learn French as a second language?

A Saskatchewan-wide study carried out between March and June of 1992 asked 882 randomly selected parents of kindergarten and grade 1 students the following question:

"Did the constitutional debate in Canada today play a role in your decision to send (or not to send) your child to a French immersion school?"

Parents with a child in French immersion

The breakdown of the 583 responses, 112 of which came from parents with children in French immersion programs, is:

	No.	%
Yes, definitely	2	2
Somewhat	8	7
Very little	18	16
No, not at all	82	75
Total	**110***	**100**

* Two respondents did not answer the question.

One parent from this group very adamantly stated:

"Giving a child an opportunity to learn a second language is very important. The Quebec issue and the Canada issue is totally unimportant and to include the constitutional debate in the questionnaire is totally absurd. Concentrate on education."

Another commented:

"Although I feel *very negative* about the Quebec separation movement, I still feel that there are more opportunities for bilingual, English- and French-speaking students (as young adults). It is Canada's official second language, and so as long as it is I think it is important for the future adults to learn it."

Parents who did not enrol their child in French immersion

Some typical comments from these parents were:

	No.	%
Yes, definitely	10	2
Somewhat	24	5
Very little	57	12
No, not at all	380	81
Total	**471***	**100**

* All respondents answered the question.

"The Quebec issue has no bearing whatsoever on our decision not to enrol our children in French immersion. Our main concern is ensuring that our children learn the English language first."

"Whether Quebec remains in unity with Canada or not would not change the fact that having a second language can only be of benefit to one, no matter where they live."

"For our family situation, we were not at all influenced by any political motivation to not enrol our children in French immersion. We decided we wanted to be able to help our children with homework. Being that neither one of us speak any French, this was a major influence in our decision."

⇨

* **Russ Husum teaches French in Chilliwack, British Columbia. From 1979 to 1993 he taught French at Regina's Luther College High School, with an educational leave at Laval University from1988-90.**

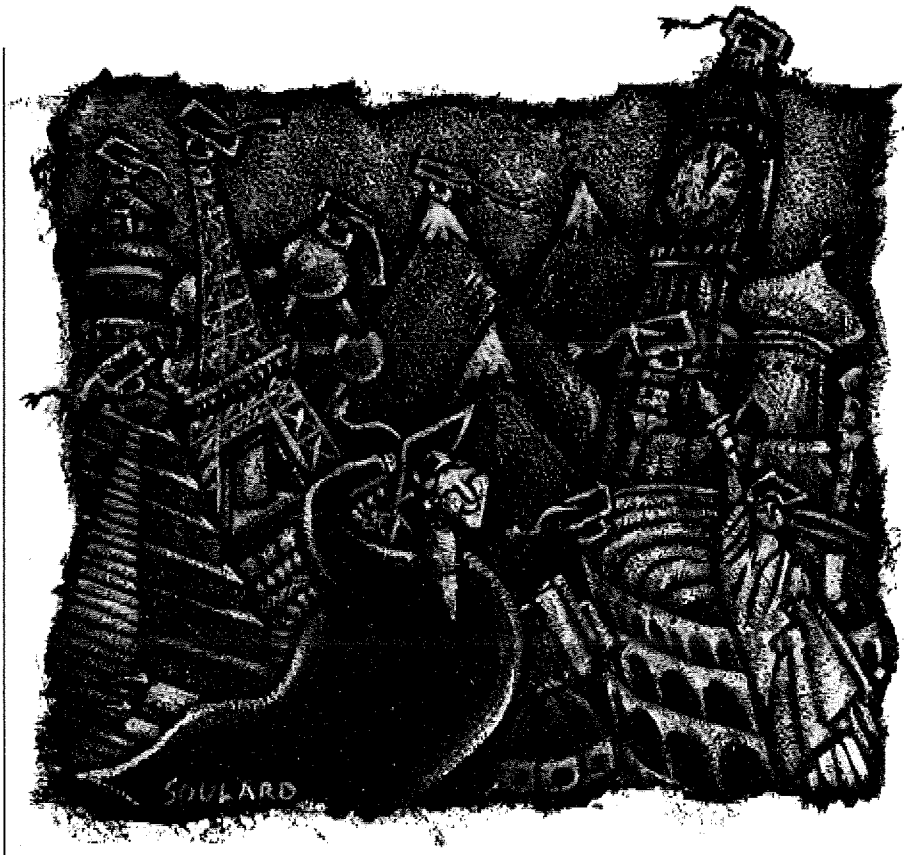
Comments connecting the political situation to the importance of learning French were almost non-existent. However, one such comment was:

"I believe that French's importance is diminishing very rapidly with all our economic problems. I believe that learning any language is important, but when the reason for our bilingual country wants to separate the importance of French drops very rapidly in my mind."

The parents clearly indicate that the constitutional debate did not influence their decisions concerning the education of their children. Considering the emotion and passion that this particular debate entailed, one can probably generalize by saying that basically Canadian parents do not let the political climate affect the educational choices for their children. What is quite surprising about these results is the fact that parents who had not chosen French immersion for their children were more adamant about this than those who had.

Saskatchewan educators contacted in the course of this survey speculated whether the constitutional question might not partially explain the levelling off, or even the slight decrease, in French immersion numbers in various school districts in the province. Survey results appear to allay any fears that politics is another factor for education decision-makers to juggle. A comment by one parent seems to represent the attitude of Saskatchewan parents towards the learning of French:

"I do not believe that French immersion and the Quebec issue are very relevant to each other. French immersion is the learning of another language, the Quebec issue is a political/constitutional issue. We should always look at what is best for the kids." ■



Studying abroad

*TOM SLOAN**

It is notoriously true that many Canadian students get itchy feet shortly after or sometimes even before graduation from university. Often their desire is simply to travel and see the world. Often, too, they also want to continue to pursue their academic or professional studies. In this case, in their hundreds and even thousands, they begin the search for financial aid, usually in the form of grants or scholarships, to enable them to go abroad, especially overseas, to combine study and the pleasure of widening their horizons.

France

Through the centuries France has consistently been a beacon for students. In the 20th century Canadians have joined the throngs of young Americans, Asians, Africans and Europeans in Paris and other French university centres.

For years following the Second World War many Canadian students took advantage of a popular program of one-year French government scholarships awarded on a merit basis to university graduates. Hundreds of young Canadians benefited from that program. Unfortunately, the tightening economic situation has had its effect and these government grants for general studies no longer exist.

Science graduates are somewhat more fortunate. Every year two or three Canadians with a master's degree in either the exact or social sciences are chosen to continue their post-graduate research in France for up to four years,

*** Tom Sloan is a frequent contributor to *Language and Society*.**

leading to the equivalent of a Ph.D. The fellowships are open to both English- and French-speaking Canadians, and the French Embassy notes that several English-speakers are currently studying in France under the program. While the students must be capable of studying in French, the emphasis is on the quality of the research itself.

In addition to the four-year program, post-doctoral students can apply for from four to seven fellowships a year, good for nine to 12 months of intensive research in France as well as for a number of shorter term grants for specific research projects.

At a more down-to-earth level, there are also grants for teachers of French to study for up to a year and training grants for researchers and technicians without university degrees for stays of from one to three months.

While all these grants are under the rubric of the Franco-Canadian Scientific Exchanges Accord, students from Quebec can also benefit from a special exchange agreement between Quebec and France.

Despite the almost exclusive emphasis on science in the Canada-France exchanges, students in other disciplines have not been completely left out. There are many bilateral university exchange programs between French and Canadian institutions, offering financial aid to students for study in France for up to one year. It is mainly recent graduates who take advantage of these programs, but third-year students in four-year courses can also apply.

Ontario

Some provincial governments co-operate actively with their own institutions. Ontario, for example, has recently signed exchange agreements with four regions of Europe, one of them being the Rhône-Alpes region of southeastern France. Ottawa's Carleton University is the institution responsible for operating the Rhône-Alpes program for all 17 Ontario universities, both English- and French-speaking. About 40 Ontario students are expected to participate in the program in 1994. "We are trying to ensure that all the universities are involved in this," says Professor David Taylor, director of the Carleton International Office, which runs the program from the Canadian end.

While the exchanges are invaluable to everyone concerned, there are financial problems. Professor Taylor regrets that the limited amounts offered by the grants mean that many students cannot properly take advantage of them. "If we take this seriously, there must be more money made available," he argues.

As an individual institutions, Carleton has been extremely active in developing international relations, having formal student and faculty exchange agreements with more than 30 foreign universities. Taylor estimates that some 100 Carleton students are studying abroad under these accords.

Canadian Bureau for International Education

One of the problems facing itchy-footed Canadian students is the absence of any central agency dealing with foreign study opportunities. The embassies, the high commissions of Commonwealth countries, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the provincial governments, and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada are just a few of the players involved. "The whole thing is astonishingly confusing," says Guy Parent of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, itself a leading player in the field.

Parent is director of the CBIE's Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Program, which administers a wide variety of grants for post-graduate study in Britain as well as other Commonwealth nations. At present, he estimates, there are almost 100 young Canadians attending British universities on three-year scholarships and fellowships and there are about 15 at institutions in other Commonwealth countries. The demand is enormous, with about 700 applicants for the 32 grants available each year. Every conceivable discipline is represented, from musicology to astrophysics.

The CBIE publishes a 204-page guide for Canadians which deals with grants and scholarships and with possibilities of paying and volunteer work abroad. The guide, "What in the World is Going on?", sells for $16.00 and covers a wide selection of studies in English, French and other languages.

The Francophone equivalent to the Commonwealth program is Les Bourses de la Francophonie, which gives about 20 young Canadians each year access to universities in French-speaking developing nations.

Other resources

In addition to the Commonwealth grants, there are a goodly number of other funding sources for studies at one or the other of the 46 accredited universities in Great Britain. These include the most prestigious of all, the Rhodes Scholarships: two Canadian graduates are chosen each year for a two-year stint at Oxford University. Also available for general studies are the Canadian Memorial Foundation Awards, good for one year at a British institution of higher learning. There are also a number of grants in specific disciplines, including the arts, law, social sciences, medicine and natural sciences. To round out the picture, there are bilateral exchange programs between many Canadian and British universities.

It would not be true to say it has never been easier for young Canadians to study abroad. It isn't. But, for those with the desire and the qualifications, it is true to say that opportunities are there.

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For further information on English- and French-language grants and scholarships

(For French government grants)
The Embassy of France
Cultural and Scientific Affairs Section
464 Wilbrod Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 6M8

(For Quebec science students)
Consulat Général de France au Québec
Monsieur le Conseiller culturel et de coopération scientifique et technique
25, rue Saint Louis
Québec, Québec
G1R 3Y8

(For Commonwealth Scholarships outside Britain, also for information on inter-university exchanges)
Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
151 Slater Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5N1

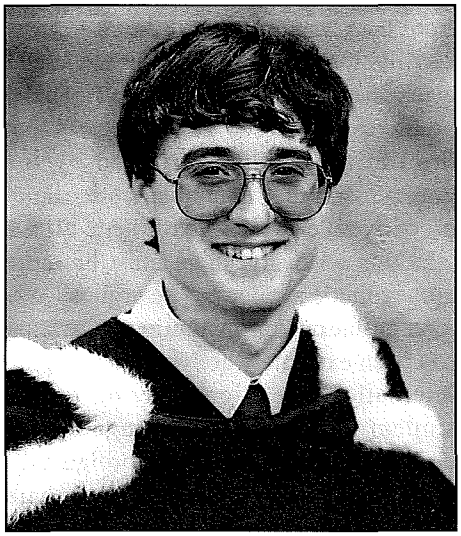
(For information on British government grants and scholarships, including Commonwealth Scholarships in Britain)
The British Council
c/o British High Commission
60 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5K7

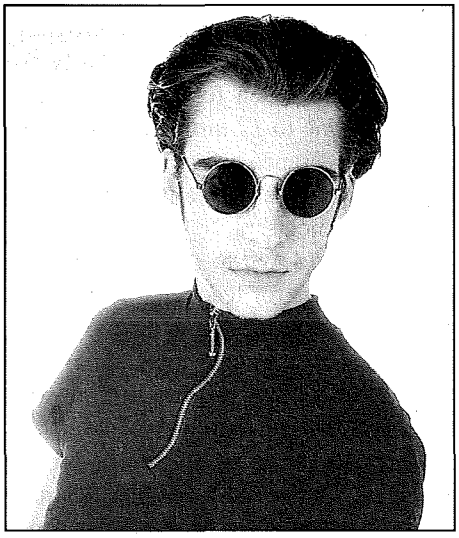
(For information on Ontario university exchanges)
Carleton International
Room 1506, Dunton Tower
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 5B6

(For general information on study or work abroad)
Canadian Bureau for International Education
Suite 1400
85 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6A4

When the chemistry IS RIGHT

TOM SLOAN





Wesley Sharman and Patrick Fillion have much in common even though they live more than half a continent apart, have different mother tongues, have had very different life experiences and pursue very different interests. Both are members of a relatively small official language minority community, both have won high honours in their field, both are bilingual, both work in the two official languages and both have high aspirations for the rest of their lives. Both demonstrate that, in an officially bilingual country, the fact of growing up in a minority situation need not be a handicap — quite the opposite.

Wesley Sharman is 22 years old and was born and brought up in the Eastern Townships region of Quebec, south and east of Montreal. A century and more ago English-speakers formed a majority of the population; today they are less than 10%.

Wes, whose family has lived in the area for several generations, attended elementary and high school in the village of North Hatley. He then attended Champlain College, which has a campus in nearby Lennoxville, one of the Townships' English-speaking enclaves. Lennoxville is also the home of Bishop's University, where Wes graduated in 1992 with first class honours in chemistry. Following graduation, he was chosen for a prestigious National Research Council scholarship and he is now at the bilingual University of Ottawa doing postgraduate work in

organic chemistry at the Ottawa-Carleton School of Graduate Studies and Research. Why chemistry? "I found out I was good at it and I liked it," he says.

Following his two-year scholarship, he will apply for a renewal to allow him to complete his Ph.D., after which he hopes to go back and teach in the Townships, perhaps at the university level. "It's home and I'm from a small town." He likes Ottawa, "but I'm kind of homesick."

In the recent tradition of young Townshippers, Wes is fully bilingual, having studied in both English and French through primary and secondary school. Now he teaches undergraduates in chemistry laboratories at Ottawa and Carleton universities in both English and French.

Patrick Fillion wasn't born a Franco-Colombian, but he is one now. He was born in Matane, Quebec, 20 years ago, but when he was six his parents moved to Prince George, British Columbia, and he has lived in British Columbia ever since. His schooling was a hodgepodge. Until grade 5 he was taught in English, from grades 5 to 7 he attended a French-language school and for the four years of high school he studied in both languages. "It wasn't satisfactory," Patrick recalls. Teaching material in French was scarce and by grade 12 there were only five left in his class. However, he survived.

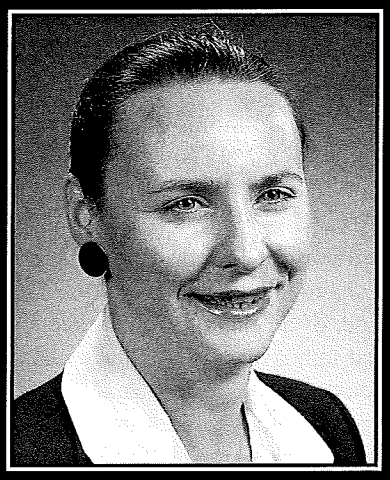
Today Patrick is an up-and-coming bilingual singer and song-writer, among other things, with two albums to his credit and more coming. He is also the winner of the 1993 award for merit in the arts and communications category presented by La Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. That prize was primarily for his work in the graphic arts, most particularly as the creator of a series of comic strips for children and adults, and paintings and pen-and-ink drawings that have already been exhibited in Vancouver and elsewhere.

More recently, however, it has been as a singer and song-writer that Patrick has been gaining fame. It all started two years ago when he was invited onto the stage at a sort of amateur show at the French Canadian Club (Le Cercle des Canadiens français) in Prince George. After two standing ovations and an encore he decided that singing was for him. Since then he has been named Francophone Singer of the Year twice for British Columbia and once at a CBC competition for the four western provinces. He performed last December at a celebration of the 25th anniversary of Radio-Canada in British Columbia and this spring he participated in a gala recorded at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and titled "Nous parlons français aussi", celebrating the French-speaking community in Canada outside Quebec. The gala is to be broadcast in both Canada and France in December.

Teaching material in French was scarce and by grade 12 there were only five left in his class. However, he survived.

Patrick writes and sings in both English and French. "I don't want a language imposed on me," he says. "I just want to sing." He is currently working on a commercial album for a Vancouver enterprise. "Pop-dance" is what he calls his music; "I write about my own experiences, he says." His goal is a career in the arts and he is off to a good start. ■

New CPF president



The newly-elected President of Canadian Parents for French is JAN FINLAY of Ottawa. Ms Finlay was Vice-President of CPF in 1992-93 and had previously served terms as Director from both Ontario and Newfoundland on CPF's National Board.

OUR CHANGING SCHOOLS

*ANDRÉE LACROIX**

Dreams of prosperity are colliding today with the reality of the economic recession and prospects of declining numbers of jobs; among other things, this means educators must question the way they teach the young people who will have to live in an unhospitable world. This is what the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (ACELF) did at its 46th Congress, held August 3 to 6.

The event at the Palais des congrès in Hull featured such eminent participants as Philippe Meirieu, Director of the Faculty of Education Sciences at the Université Lumière – Lyon 2, France; Robert Bisaillon, President of the Superior Council of Education of Quebec; Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Education and Higher Education and Science of Quebec; Luce Brossard, director of the review Vie Pédagogique and the Commissioner of Official Languages, Victor C. Goldbloom, who took part in the Congress for the first time.

Background

The educators left no doubt: schools must change. This will be very difficult because, of all the areas that have experienced upheaval, schools have changed the least. They must transform their teaching methods, which no longer suit today's more heterogeneous and less motivated classes.

We still have teachers, but the lack of true educators is making itself felt. In the words of Luce Brossard, who synthesized the work done at the Congress, "It seems to me that schools can no longer do without educators, that is, adults who agree to impart to young people the few certainties they still have — for it is almost impossible that after all this time, despite the upheavals and shocks, they have not developed some — adults who also are willing to go along with young people in their search for reference points...."

"Our educational system...must be mindful of the modernization of French and teach the new terminology."

Young people, confronted with numerous problems, have less and less motivation to learn. This is regrettable in an economy in which the importance of quality education is constantly increasing. Outlining the problem, the then Secretary of State of Canada, Monique Landry, took up the words of the President of the Information Technology Association of Canada, Janice Moyer, who had stated in 1991 that there were 600,000 jobs going vacant for want of qualified and specialized personnel, at a time when nearly a million were unemployed.

The Commissioner speaks

French-language educators face the additional challenges of teaching in French to counter assimilation in the majority English-speaking provinces and of using the French terminology associated with the new technologies, terminology that will enable young French-speakers to work in French in high technology areas.

Dr. Goldbloom is particularly concerned about this subject. He told ACELF: "If we do not create the terminology that will enable us to communicate in scientific and other fields, others will fill the void." He reminded those attending the Congress that publications are available and that Canada has already done important work in this area.

"This research," he said, "leads to the development of glossaries that allow us not only to operate effectively and intelligently in specialized fields, but also to engage in useful communications worldwide without being obliged to resort to other languages."

The Commissioner believes that the modernization of French cannot be accomplished solely by terminologists.

"It is essential that experts prepare glossaries," he said in an interview, "but if no one uses them, nothing is gained. Our educational system and our entire professional training system, in general,

* Andrée Lacroix is the French editor in OCOL's Communications Branch.

Victor C. Goldbloom

must be mindful of this modernization and teach the new terminology in each field. French-speakers must also take pride in using French terminology rather than, in some cases, taking the path of least resistance and adopting the English terms."

The Commissioner often reminds people who tend to underestimate the role of French worldwide that the world market numbers 120 million speakers of French. Those, he says, who are led to believe by the vitality of the Japanese economy that many more people use Japanese to communicate than French are quite mistaken.

"In fact, the number of people who use mainly Japanese is also 120 million. If we can explain to Canadians, eight million of whom speak French and only about 45,400 Japanese, that the French market is just as large as the Japanese market, and much more accessible," he added, "we might be able to penetrate that market."

That is a reality that young people should bear in mind, for they will be our business people tomorrow.

In his talk to the Congress the Commissioner alluded to his concerns about the teaching of history, an area where shortcomings have for years hindered an understanding of Canada's official languages policy.

"When I am told that Canada's linguistic duality was imposed on a population that did not want it and was not consulted by an arrogant government engaging in social engineering and manipulation, and that it is a story of 24 years of failure that should be abandoned, I wonder about our understanding of the history of Canada," he said. "How can we be unaware that, in 1534, Jacques Cartier set foot on the soil of Gaspé and that, since then, the French language has been part of our life, of our human reality?"

The Commissioner is concerned about these questions because the 1991 census showed that when people identifying themselves as French-speakers were asked about principal language used at home the results were disquieting.

It seems that many do take the path of least resistance. Among them are many young people living in minority situations, a fact that is deplored by the other young people in these same communities who are fighting to change this state of affairs.

Among the latter, a dozen representatives of young people's associations in French-language minority communities came from all parts of Canada to participate in the Congress and to talk with a team from the Office of the Commissioner about the need to enhance the status of French.

It was their opinion that what detracts from the popularity of French among other young people is that it is associated only with the classroom and not with pleasure. They believe that attempts should be made to reach out, for example, by means of a humorist who can get the message across in an entertaining way. They also asked the Commissioner to take part in activities such as the Festival Jeunesse in Atlantic Canada and the Parlement Jeunesse in the West and that other activities involving dialogue among young French Canadians be developed.

Fruitful workshops

Those attending the Congress who participated in the workshops on changing values or new technologies expressed the wish to develop better communications and networks for discussion.

In the workshops on changing values, the teachers proposed, among other measures:

- forming a committee in which young people could express their needs and co-operate in developing an educational project;
- taking an active part, economically and culturally, in the French-language community in order to develop a better understanding of its distinct and plural character.

In the workshops on technologies, among other things, the participants recommended:

- determining whether it would be possible to use television to acquaint Canadians from all parts of the country and new immigrants with one another;
- drawing up a list of all the methods of becoming familiar with the new technologies and finding a way to enable everyone to make use of them.

Many ideas were brought forward by the teachers participating in regional workshops.

⇨

In human terms, the teachers agreed that they had to develop young people's ability to think, judge and innovate and to be open to diversity, sympathize with the sufferings of others and respect human life.

If schools are not especially good at giving young people the basic training to enable them to integrate harmoniously into society, in Luce Brossard's view, it is because they place too much emphasis on similarities and not enough on differences.

This latter point was at the centre of Philippe Meirieu's concerns. He proposed adopting different educational methods adapted to the needs of particular groups. He also stressed the need to train teachers who can foster harmonious relations with students. Robert Bisaillon suggested introducing various educational pathways to provide better orientation to students.

The participants in the Congress wondered whether they should not work together to develop new ways of teaching based on the analyses that each school makes of its situation, of history and of the strengths of its environment. In some of the workshops, however, it was recommended that each school should develop its own solutions and devise its own educational path. Some workshops called for autonomous school management, an issue in which the Commissioner has long been active.

The Commissioner also told the teachers that two provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, had already adopted the required legislation and that, to ensure that others follow their example, he would continue to exert pressure in this area.

With this commitment by the Commissioner, and with the presentation of innovative initiatives launched by 10 schools which show that it is still possible to give young people a quality education adapted to the new realities, the Congress ended on a positive note. ■

(Our translation)

How would you translate that?

*FRANCINE GAGNON**

Last September 30 through October 2 the University of Montreal hosted a forum on machine translation devoted to advanced research, immediate applications and computerized translation aids.

Some examples of machine translation are bizarre. This one was produced using a general type of software: "Temperatures may be increased or have declined to increases of one or two grades with the touch of the switch, minimum and setting maximum of 64°F and 86°F respectively." You would never guess that this refers to the operation of a heat pump!

Machine translation has often been unrealistically portrayed as a substitute for human translation. Those who have looked to it as a source of easy bilingualism, rapidity, coherence, accuracy and low cost have been disappointed. Translation is not an automatic process. In recent years the function of machine translation has changed. The translator is now responsible for the part of the job requiring intelligence. The translation machine is a servant performing the routine part of the operation, a sort of tool box containing terminological files, grammars and dictionaries.

According to André Abbou of the French Language Industries Observatory in Paris, "translation aids are having

*** Francine Gagnon is a freelance journalist and Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *Vidéo-Presse*. She has been a finalist or a winner in journalistic writing competitions four times in the past six years.**

AT LAST

An improved keyboard

*ANDRÉ LA ROSE**

Do you remember the first time you had to use the keyboard of a personal computer? How long it took you, especially getting used to hitting the right keys in the right order? Have you since had to use your trusty old Selectric™ to type an envelope or cheque or had to use another computer, some of whose keys do not correspond to those on yours?

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) took the first step towards solving the problem by adopting, in November 1991, a new standard for English and French keyboards. Inspired by the provisional international

to be reconsidered in terms of their aims, prospects and resources and adapted to the actual needs of translators. Hence the predilection for a few practical technologies and for aids giving pre-eminence to the translator's knowledge and experience."

Translation machinery is now seen as a complement rather than a competitor. "Under these conditions, (computer-assisted translation) can cover an increasingly larger portion of the Union's multilingual requirement," maintains Hubert Paesmans of the European Union in Luxembourg.

The new trend is to create an environment favourable to users by designing easy-to-use tools suited to all their needs.

"Installed in a network, for example, they share the same data bases, glossaries and textual files and can contribute simultaneously to the same job," says Patricia Labrie, an office automation representative for the Quebec Business Sector of IBM Canada Ltd. "Using this system, you can standardize and store data that are consistently the same."

In order to succeed with machine translation, the field must be limited to very narrow, repetitive sectors, as is the case with insurance work. One of the best examples of feasibility is the METEO system, which has been used for 17 years by Environment Canada for translating weather forecasts. In the words of Annette Grimaila, vice president of John Chandioux Consultants, it is "the only system of its kind in the world; it will handle a workload of 50,000 words daily, an expertise we should export." Weather forecasts are constantly changing. In order to be useful, they must be analysed round the clock and translated in less than an

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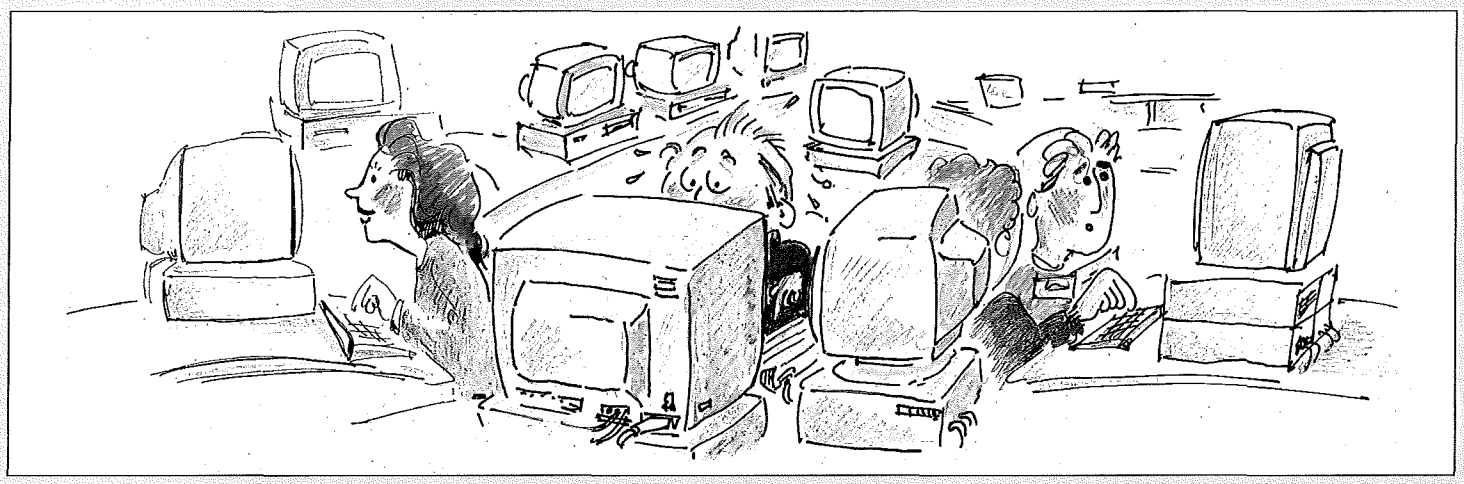

standard for keyboards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), this standard applies to all types of informatics equipment, from the simple microcomputer to the central unit. Abandoning both the Selectric™ keyboard and the DOS keyboard for French Canada, the CSA has even dropped its own provisional 1988 standard and adopted a new keyboard which makes it easier to access accented letters, both uppercase and lowercase, sometimes by striking a single key and using the Latin I character set. This makes it possible to create practically all the characters commonly employed in European languages that use this alphabet. These characters are displayed by using the multilingual code page 850 in DOS or the ANSI character set in Windows. The English or French terms (sometimes abbreviated) that appear on non-alphanumeric keys, for their part, have given way to ISO icons.

The federal government has endorsed this initiative and, in October 1992, integrated it into Treasury Board Information Technologies Standard (TBITS) No. 5. This TBITS, which is meant to support the Official Languages Act, applies to all keyboards in widespread use acquired by federal departments and agencies after January 1, 1993.

The new bilingual keyboard is now available on the market. It costs about $190, some $20 of which is for the peripheral driver software. ■

(Our translation)

*** The author is the Director of André La Rose, Editorial Consultant, Inc., a company founded in 1977 that adheres to the Charte québécoise de la qualité totale.**

hour. A task that used to take a day can now be done in about 10 minutes. In this particular case, computerization costs about one-fiftieth of the regular price.

However effective it may be, machine translation requires an investment that is often beyond the means of independent translators and small companies. But there are less costly solutions such as machine pre-translation, terminological processing software, terminology banks, interactive translation memories and a linguistic data bank (TERMIUM, for example). The most accessible alternative, the translator's work station, is becoming increasingly popular. This is a flexible, evolving system that uses equipment and software commonly available on the market: word processing, on-line dictionaries and terminology files, electronic mail, conjugation software, comparison of texts, etc. The Centre for Information Technology Innovation of Industry Canada is constantly researching better software for work stations.

Given the worldwide scale of communications and markets today, coupled with Canada's relations with the main cultural and language groups, our companies are well-placed to develop effective electronic language processing tools. The ultimate goal in this field is the recognition, comprehension, reproduction and translation of speech. Finally, the Canadian Language Technology Institute maintains that "language technology is vital to any country, region or business seeking to become involved in international competition."

Let us bear in mind that Canada has 460 years of experience in translation. As far back as New France, the first French-Iroquois glossaries were prepared with the help of two Indians taken to France by Jacques Cartier for training as interpreters. ■

(Our translation)

COMPUTER SLANG
Is it user-friendly?

*COLIN MORTON**

Photo: Superstock

Suppose a colleague tells you he has just given his supervisor his *input* for the latest report and he has a little *downtime* while waiting for her *feedback*. How would you reply?

Ten years ago you might have frowned and asked what language your friend was speaking.

Today, however, you would probably simply say, "Fine, then let's go for coffee."

You now have a microcomputer on your own desk, in all likelihood, and have learned to deal with it on its own terms. Even if you still can't explain the difference between *RAM* and *ROM*, you no longer have doubts about consigning your morning's work to an invisible *file* magnetically recorded on a *hard drive* you have never seen. You may even *copy it to the floppy* without a smirk. These terms are simply part of the jargon describing some of the specialized tools and functions of the information age.

If you are like most workers, after using your computer for a year or two you may have difficulty remembering

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*** Colin Morton is a freelance writer who lives in Ottawa and works on an IBM-compatible PC, which is the object of a "Hymn of Thanks" published in his most recent book of poems, *How to Be Born Again*.**

how you even got your job done without it. When words like *input*, *downtime* and *feedback* creep into your everyday conversation you may feel a little self-conscious about them, but they no longer sound strange or pretentious. Quite rapidly, they have joined the pool of common experience that gives life and colour to our speech.

Children use computers from an early age and often talk as if they regard themselves as computers.

Electronic computers have been part of our lives for nearly half a century now. In the past decade, however, they have become omnipresent. Whether we shop at a large department store, at the corner confectionery or by telephone; whether we work in an office or on a farm or are unemployed, computers surround us, tracking nearly all of our actions.

At the same time, computers have become smaller, less expensive and more *user-friendly*. The mystery, and even fear, that once surrounded them has all but disappeared. Children use them at home and at school from a very early age and often talk as if they regard themselves as computers. They may speak quite naturally of consulting their *memory banks*, for instance, and college students, when they need to sleep, almost invariably *crash*.

Some commentators have warned that this tendency to think of the human brain as a kind of biological computer is a dangerous one. The mind is not merely a programmable network of on-off switches, they maintain, and to speak as if it were is to drastically undervalue the human intellect.

As scientists move closer to building computers with artificial intelligence, these are not trivial warnings. It is worth remembering, however, that people have always used metaphors to speak about their world. It is a characteristic of our nimble minds, which never follow a straight path when a detour would be more amusing.

Over the past two centuries of rapid industrial progress English-speakers have readily adapted many technological terms to everyday use. Even when the technology becomes out-dated these figures of speech may persist. We still, for example, speak of a *flash in the pan* or say that someone *goes off half-cocked* without even thinking of the early flintlocks whose unreliable mechanisms gave the language those phrases. Although we may never have watched a blacksmith in action we still know it is best to *strike when the iron is hot*. We know that when we are going *at full steam* we should be careful not to go off the track, but even when we are eager to *take off* we appreciate the importance of stepping back, at times, to *get things in focus*. Although we are quite aware that we are neither trains nor airplanes nor cameras, these metaphors serve to make our speech more colourful and help us express our ideas.

Relatively few computer terms have entered everyday language, so far. Over the next few years, as computers become ever more pervasive and a generation that has never known life without them reaches maturity, more such terms will undoubtedly become common. Meanwhile, some that are now used will probably fall out of favour and return to the realm of specialists' jargon.

Even when the technology becomes out-dated figures of speech related to it may persist.

The manager who claims to be *programmed* to win and the woman who says she is *hard-wired* to want an M.A. probably know very well that they are using metaphors. On the other hand, you might suspect that colleagues who want to *interface* with you over coffee are bringing work home too often. They need more *downtime* or it will be *Game Over*. ■

Language AND SOCIETY

TO OUR READERS

We regret to inform you that there will be no Spring number of *Language and Society*. Number 46 will be the Summer issue.

The Editors

Inter-university dictation contest

*CHANTAL BEAUREGARD**

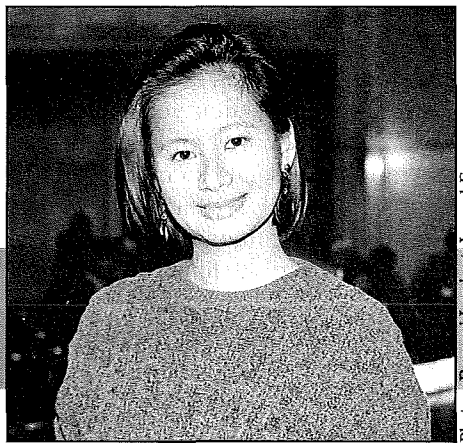


Photo: Bernard Lambert, Journal *Forum*, Université de Montréal

For many minutes, we sat feeling the good food working inside us...

Montreal was the site of a Canadian first last September: a dictation contest, in English and French, in which some 100 students from four of the city's universities — McGill University and Concordia University, the Université de Montréal, the Université du Québec à Montréal, as well as the École des Hautes Études Commerciales, the École Polytechnique and the École de Technologie Supérieure — participated.

This initiative of David Johnston, Rector of McGill University, quickly roused the enthusiasm of his colleagues. "We had two objectives," Claude Lessard, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the Université de Montréal, where the contest was held, told us. "We wanted to mark the start of the school year in a special way and to emphasize the importance that universities attach to knowledge of the written word for success in education."

The students came to "appraise themselves", to "find out what they were worth." The *McGill Reporter* compared the dictation contest, which is essentially French in origin, to the spelling bee familiar to English-speakers. Half of the group came from French-speaking institutions and half from English-speaking ones. Nearly half the students entered both sections of the contest. Significantly, 70% of the participants were women!

"The written language is a problem in nearly all Western societies," Dean Lessard commented. "We are dealing with young people who have grown up with television and have not been introduced to reading. Communication is encouraged, but oral, not written communication." According to Catherine Houpert of the Université de Montréal, one of the participants in the contest, "Our French teachers allow us to express our opinions on subjects that concern us, but do not provide us with the tools to do so."

The Quebec Department of Higher Education was the first institution to support this project officially, by awarding a grant of $25,000. This made it possible to offer cash prizes and door prizes, including dictionaries and gift certificates.

Mayor Jean Doré of Montreal read the dictation. The students then had five minutes to reread their texts. The French dictation was about the joys of a stroll in Montreal and the charms of Mount Royal or a drink sipped on the terrace of a Montreal café, while the English one

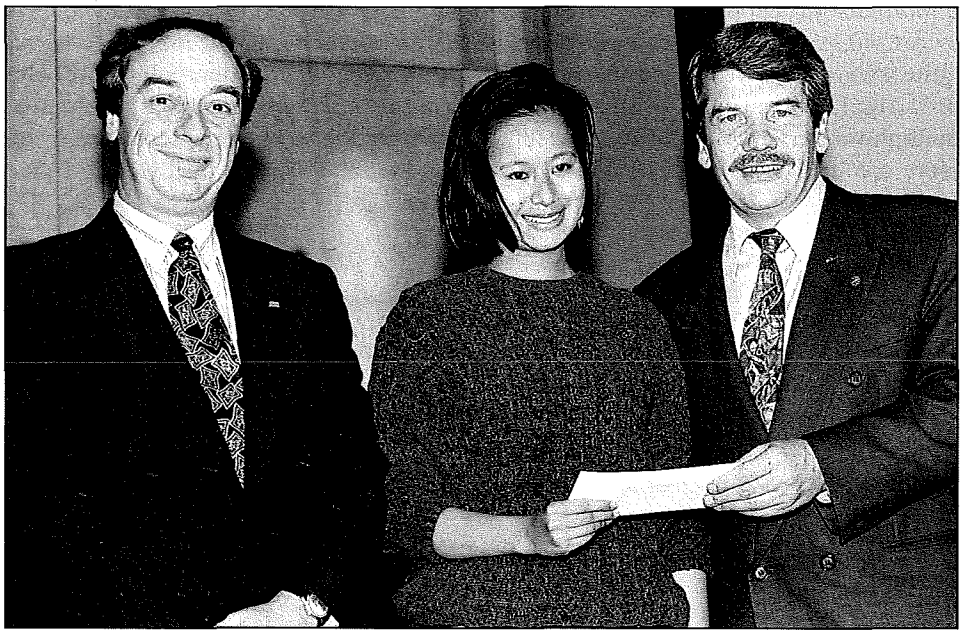


Photo: Bernard Lambert, Journal *Forum*, Université de Montréal

Jean Guertin, Thuy Diem Tuyen Vo, Jean Doré

*** A public relations officer and communications consultant since 1988, Chantal Beauregard has extensive experience in communications as an interviewer, host and producer of public affairs broadcasts for Radio-Canada, the CBC and TVOntario.**

ENGLISH DICTATION —
CONCOURS INTERUNIVERSITAIRE DE MONTRÉAL, SEPTEMBRE 1993

A good dinner

It was Saturday when I came back home. I found that Grandfather had already swallowed a cup of ersatz coffee, skinned and cleaned the hares, and laid them out on a three-legged table. He held up the skins: "These will make two pairs of good mittens."
As soon as Mother arrived, she seasoned the hares and put them into the oven to bake. She boiled a whole swede turnip, and I tell you that never afterwards did I feel so proud as when Grandfather chuckled and said in his own language: "Conrad has given us a feast. What a feast he has given us!" We ate dinner slowly and relishingly. Mother smiled with tears in her eyes. For many minutes, we sat feeling the good food working inside us and then Grandfather went to the buffet and carefully measured out into two thimble cups the last of the old liqueur. He and Mother sat close to the amber-coloured (1) porcelain stove. They sat there turning their glasses and warming them with their fingers and palms, sniffing the liquor and touching it with the tip of their tongues.

1) Can also be spelled amber-colored

LIST OF DIFFICULTIES IN WRITTEN ENGLISH:

necessitate predecessor subtle occurence resuscitate commitment an envelope an address scissors lieutenant independence conscientious government.

described the pleasures of a family dinner. A dozen or so difficult words had been added to both texts to help decide between the best in case of a tie.

The grand prize for this first competition, awarded to the contestant who turned in the best results in *both* languages, was won by a new Quebecer, Thuy Diem Tuyen Vo, a student at the École des Hautes-Études Commerciales who had not known a single word of French when she arrived in Quebec at the age of six. "I have been in Quebec for 13 years. I like French. I entered only for the French contest," she explained after picking up her $3,000 prize, "but when I heard the mayor read the English dictation I decided to try it." Tuyen, who had only three errors in each piece of dictation, is of Vietnamese origin. At the age of three, she emigrated with her parents to Australia, where she lived until she was six and became familiar with English.

The first prize of $2,000 for French dictation only was won by Brigitte Martin, a student at the Université de Montréal, who made one and a half errors. Two winners tied for the English section, each with one error: Joya Balfour and Arnold Lele, both students at McGill University. They each received $2,000.

"Young people are terribly afraid of writing," Dean Lessard explains. "They must be given back their confidence. What is more, this activity in both languages brings us closer together and allows us to have a look at what the 'other group' is producing. We always complain of not being read by the 'other group'."

With the competition off to a fine start, the next Montreal inter-university contests will be held in rotation at the start of every academic year at each of the participating educational institutions.

That's not all: on October 7 Radio-Québec launched the Dictée des Amériques, a new international spelling competition that it is organizing with many partners and sponsors. It will be televised in North and South America by Radio-Québec, TVOntario and TV5 and will take place at the Université de Montréal on March 26, 1994. Six Latin American countries, 11 American states, nine Canadian provinces and the Northwest Territories have already confirmed their participation in the competition which, this time, will be held in French only. ■

(Our translation)

Note
For the French dictation, see the corresponding article in French.

The ICRLP
Quebec's Centre for Language Planning

ANDRÉ LA ROSE

If you work in communications or in second-language teaching, or if you use a computer on the job, chances are you will one day benefit directly or indirectly from the work of the International Centre for Research on Language Planning (ICRLP).

The ICRLP is a part of Laval University's Arts Faculty. It operates a program of research which, under the auspices of language planning (defined below), aims at meeting the need, recognized by linguists and others who work with language, for a scientific description of oral and written French usage in Quebec, and at devising methods and instruments with which to teach the language more effectively and use it in the new information technologies.

Under *planning the status of languages* the ICRLP conducts research projects in geolinguistics and the sociology of language, describing and examining the dissemination of languages in the world and mapping out the topography of French internationally. The ICRLP has a wide range of information in this field; the quality of its projects and publications have earned it an international reputation.

The planning of the language itself is really the focal point of the ICRLP's research and training activities. Using the original linguistic concepts of oral and written French inventoried by the ICRLP, its researchers, who have at their disposal the extensive lexicographic resources of the Trésor de la langue française du Québec and of many terminology banks and textual sources, are eminently qualified to create reference works and informatics tools for use in the treatment of language data, in the

Language planning NOT A NEW CONCEPT...[1]

The usual result of language planning is greater harmony, since it rests on a consensus as to the society's perception of the language and its function. It can be defined as an intervention whereby the state puts forth "a medium- and long-term effort to derive greater benefit from language as a collective resource, in accordance with the needs and interests of the nation."[2] Placing the emphasis primarily on the integrative function of language — which favours general participation in the culture of ethnic groups — and on its communicative function — which enables people to express themselves — language planning falls into two main categories: planning the status of languages, an activity focused on the relationships between two or more languages being used in a given territory, and planning the language (its corpus) per se, an activity concerned with the actual structures of the language and with its effective use in daily life. Parliament's passage of the Official Languages Act and Quebec's adoption of the Charter of the French Language are

teaching of French as a second language, in the teaching of writing, and in the writing and editing of texts.

This line of research includes the ICRLP's efforts from 1990 to 1992 to create the PROSE grammatical and stylistic editing software. The purpose was to make written French a language suited to microinformatics and to enable French-speakers to benefit from the resources of a computer when writing commercial and specialized texts, all the while perfecting their knowledge of the language. The same applies to the knowledge garnered by the ICRLP in oral French, which will be used in the computer synthesis and recognition of the spoken word, a leading-edge field.

The ICRLP offers unique expertise and documentation service.

While the ICRLP's primary raison d'être is the concerns of Quebec society and research, it also has very close ties with organizations concerned with language, such as the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Quebec Conseil de la langue française. It apportions some of the work involved in its basic research projects on language to language organizations and enterprises, where appropriate, and to outside interests able to apply it to other language situations.

The expertise and documentary service provided by the ICRLP is unique in the world in its availability to federal and provincial departments, foreign governments and businesses and organizations and individuals interested in language. It organizes yearly conferences where researchers, trainees and graduate students can take part in scientific exchanges and occasional symposiums bringing together international specialists in various fields of research.

When, in 1990, as the result of a change of emphasis in the program, it succeeded the International Centre for Research on Bilingualism (founded in 1967 by Laval University in response to a recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism) the ICRLP clearly demonstrated its ability to adapt to the new concerns of Quebec and Canadian society. At a time when relations between English and French had become more clearly delineated, it focused its attention on the planning of language itself, in order to assist French to face the pressures of an English-speaking North America, while at the same time continuing its function of charting the status of the two languages. ■

(Our translation)

in the former category, while in the second are the terminological standardization work being done by the federal government (see Jean Fahmy's article on page 14) and the publication by the Office de la langue française of "Titres et fonctions au féminin".[3] ■

(Our translation)

Notes

1 This text was inspired in part by Denise Daoust and Jacques Maurais' excellent article, "L'aménagement linguistique", in Jacques Maurais, Politique et aménagement linguistiques, "L'ordre des mots", Government of Quebec and Le Robert, Quebec and Paris, 1987, pp. 5-46.

2 Jean-Claude Corbeil, "L'aménagement linguistique du Québec", Langue et Société, Guérin, Montreal, 1980, p. 9. Quoted in Denise Daoust and Jacques Maurais, p. 11.

3 Quebec, Office de la langue française, "Titres et fonctions au féminin: essai d'orientation de l'usage", Government of Quebec, 1986.

LUMEN, INC.

GEORGES ROCHON

The new economic order, in the form of the globalization of markets combined with a recession, is putting Canadian firms to a severe test. They must compete with long-established foreign firms. To succeed, or simply to survive, they have to mobilize all their resources. This is the story of how one Canadian firm has capitalized on conditions specific to Canada in order to prosper.

The incessant comings and goings in the offices of the Hull branch of Lumen Inc. soon convince the observer of the vitality of this firm, whose activities extend well beyond the borders of Canada.

This electrical and electronics wholesaler, whose first branch opened its doors in Saint-Eustache 30 years ago (it now has 20 branches in Quebec), is proving capable of meeting increasingly intense competition as trade "borders" are erased.

How did Lumen Inc. come to have a global role? The answer is simple: in 1984 it became a member of the French Sonepar group, which is number one in the world in the distribution of electrical equipment. Through its subsidiaries Sonepar is active in France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Portugal, Russia and, of course, Canada.

How does the destiny of a Quebec firm change when it becomes one of a number of subsidiaries with such diverse origins? Two decisive changes are worth noting: suddenly, Lumen Inc. acquired an international orientation, and it found that it derived strength from its sister firms.

Sonepar is careful not to exercise strict regulation over its many subsidiaries. The role it plays is one of oversight from a distance. However, the mother firm is well placed to help its subsidiaries develop the relationships they need, beyond the borders of their home country, in order to carry out successful initiatives abroad. There is no doubt, too, that Lumen Inc. and its mother firm enjoy better relations because of their common language.

A project that the Quebec firm was considering two years ago illustrates the type of support that Lumen Inc. can expect from Sonepar. The building site in question was in the Balkans and the client insisted that the electrical equipment be purchased from Polish, Dutch and Austrian suppliers. Although in the end the project was cancelled because of conflicts raging in that part of the world, Lumen Inc. was prepared to respect the contract specifications, thanks to the resources of its mother company. In connection with another project, this time in Africa, Lumen Inc. called on the mother company for information about products of European origin.

English and French: Key assets

While Lumen Inc.'s international activities provide Canadians with an interesting model, its activities on Canadian soil can also be instructive. Lumen Inc. has followed a path characteristic of many small and medium-sized businesses in Quebec. Everyone is aware, for example, that Quebec firms have gradually developed French terminology over the years to replace the English technical terms that had long been used. As Maurice Chicoine, director of the Hull branch points out, "We laughed the first time Hydro-Québec ordered 'chaussons' [a sock-type of element], but it is the correct term and has passed into ordinary language"; and so the francization of technical terminology continues. Subsequently, attracted by the Ontario market and wishing to serve its clients better, Lumen Inc. undertook to adapt its work instruments to English: invoices, stock management software and so forth.

Clearly, the more knowledge of languages we have, the more our competitors will have reason to fear us.

The linguistic efforts made by Lumen have borne fruit. When it became part of the Sonepar group it also became a sister firm of Gescan Electrical Distributors Ltd., a group of companies established in western Canada. The two firms found that they carried on certain aspects of their operations very differently, despite their common area of

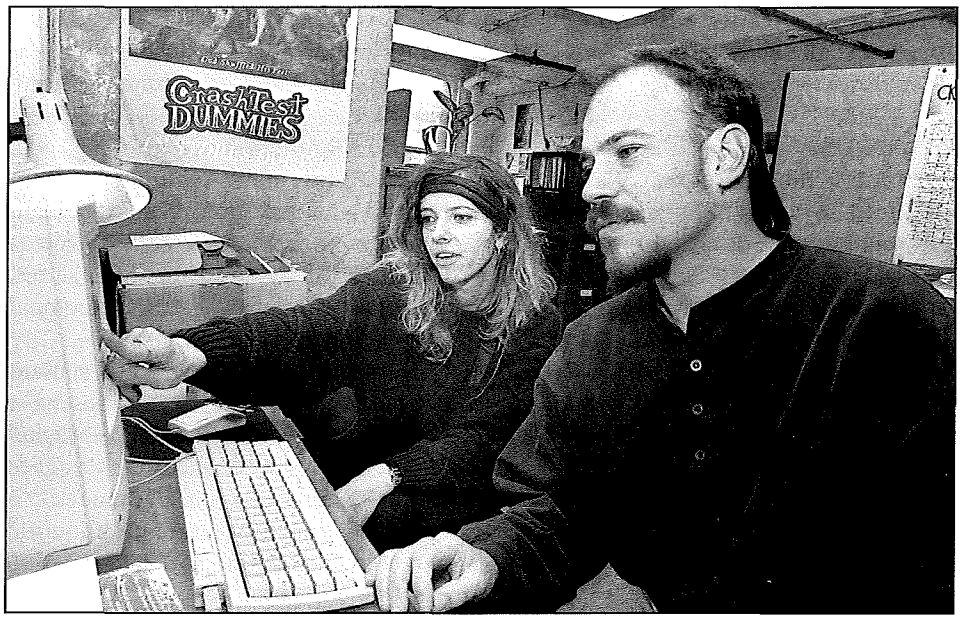
activity, and that they could benefit greatly from their relationship. Aware of their common interests, they were motivated to hold discussions and provide mutual support. It is interesting that this contact between Canadian firms took place after they were acquired by a French multinational.

The lessons that the experience of Lumen Inc. can teach are clear. First, to exploit Canadian know-how to the full we must be able to communicate among ourselves, not only because this is a desirable social objective but also because it is a question of our future as an industrialized country. In addition, to be able to benefit from our know-how in international markets we must form strategic groupings, exploit sources of information and communicate with our potential clientele. Clearly, the more knowledge of languages we have (and we already have an advantage in this regard) the more our competitors will have reason to fear us.

The approach taken by Lumen Inc. closely resembles that of the "evolutionary organization", a model developed by modern theoreticians of organizations which the French refer to as an "intelligent organization". Briefly, a firm that follows this model does not wait to take stock of changes in its environment. It relies on its resources and accumulated experience to anticipate changes and prepare itself accordingly. The evolutionary organization thus has a considerable advantage over one that adjusts only when circumstances have changed. The transformation into an evolutionary organization is not done for intellectual reasons; it takes place under the constraints of a fickle market. Clearly, this transformation has a linguistic dimension.

Lumen Inc. engages in competition adroitly, and there is good reason to think that it will be able to exploit its linguistic assets, and develop them, so as to carve out for itself a share of the world market for electrical equipment. ■

(Our translation)



LA BANDE MAGNÉTIQUE

ANDRÉE LACROIX

At 10 Ontario Street West in Montreal may be found a group of young radio buffs who have their own special way of promoting bilingualism.

This likeable bunch is known as La Bande Magnétique. They are increasingly appealing to non-commercial radio stations because they produce programming on a wide range of current affairs topics in both English and French.

"We design programs of an educational or social nature and sometimes programs with a touch of 'activism', to criticize certain things, but never in a malicious way. Our customers are the community, university and ethnic radio stations," explains general manager Josée Lavoie.

La Bande would like to play an active role as a cultural enterprise in local economic development, to improve its position on the Canadian and international cultural scene and to provide training to people who have potential in the field.

In addition to Josée Lavoie, the staff of La Bande Magnétique, founded in 1983 by three producers, consists of director of communications Lyle Stewart, production director Gordon Rocchio, director of commercial production Marc Perron, five producers and one secretary. One of the three founding members, Jean-François Drapeau, chairs La Bande's board of directors.

La Bande Magnétique is funded in part by private companies and the sale of its productions. But some 80% of its revenue derives from federal and provincial government training programs.

As Lyle Stewart says, "That's the way Josée and I started out. We were hired to work on 'Virage Inconnu' and 'Turning Point', two series on science and technology and their effect on society."

Today Josée and Gordon provide training for the producers without requiring them to follow any rigid rules.

"All the producers work according to their own lights, in terms of both the subject and the style or music to be incorporated in the program. We do not ⇨

impose any standards, apart from those already established by the media," says Josée Lavoie.

Productions

Over one hundred programs have been produced to date. A French-speaking crew produces the French programs and an English-speaking crew the English programs.

The main French productions include "A court de notes", a series that has given numerous university musicians an opportunity to air their compositions and to describe their experiences and their approach to music.

Productions in English include "Constanze" and "Prime Directive: The Encounter of Two Worlds". The first program reveals the search for self-worth of Constanze, the wife of Mozart, who lived in the shadow of the celebrated musician. The second shows the effects over time on the Aboriginal peoples of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World.

No translations exist of the programs of La Bande Magnétique. Its members believe that a translated program cannot be as interesting as one conceived in the language of the public for which it is intended. However, the fields explored are sometimes the same.

Such is the case for "Virage Inconnu" and "Turning Point". Of note this year in these series will be features on birth technologies, high-definition television and the Montreal Biodome in French, and electronic mail, computer animation and sound art in English. University professors from every part of Canada have been interviewed for these series, as well as, on occasion, artists, company directors and museologists.

Thus far, 15 English-language stations and 12 French-language stations have broadcast programs by La Bande Magnétique. While its productions are designed primarily for Canadian audiences, La Bande has recently targeted the world market by distributing its catalogue in 46 countries; besides its own productions, the catalogue lists those of a number of Canadian and foreign radio stations.

Marc Perron, Josée Lavoie and Lyle Stewart

There is no doubt that bilingualism is an asset for doing business on the international scale, as it is on the domestic side. "I think one of our big advantages is to be an organization producing in both languages," Lyle Stewart emphasizes. The Canadian official languages communities generally want to hear programs in their own language, but sometimes there are surprises.

"Many of the stations in English Canada order French shows. The reverse also occurs. Last year one of the people who ordered 'Virage Inconnu' was from Memorial University, in St. John's, Newfoundland. It is not something you would quite expect," Lyle Stewart says.

Stimulating environment

Lyle Stewart, a unilingual native of British Columbia, initially found it difficult to work in an environment where French is often spoken. Most things were lost on him. With time, however, he became bilingual, like all the members of the team.

"I think it's a matter of keeping your ears open. When you hear people speaking French every day and you begin to learn the way they speak, you become much more comfortable. You get to know them, so you're not inhibited and shy any more."

Lyle thinks the effort is worth the trouble. "This really opened doors for me, linguistically, culturally and socially."

If La Bande Magnétique still seems to have the wind in its sails after 10 years in operation it is not because it has had no storms to weather, but rather because of the team's determination. After recently losing much of their technical equipment in a burglary the members of La Bande did not let themselves get demoralized.

"We've just had a benefit concert in a local club. We raised a few hundred dollars that way. So we'll be able to get some more equipment," Lyle Stewart says.

"Sure, we needed money," continues Josée Lavoie, "but the benefit also allowed us to meet people who had good things to say to us, others who wanted to get to know us, and even some people who told us that they would like to collaborate with us. That was our proof that it was really worth the effort to go on."

For further information about La Bande Magnétique, telephone (514) 849-1392. ■

(Our translation)

TVOntario: Award-winning videos

Photos: TVOntario

TVOntario offers fresh, alternative fare for teaching and learning French as a second language.

Action, passion, humour and intrigue make TVO's new series "Nouvelles à l'écran" an invaluable asset. Geared to senior grades, this series consists of five half-hour dramas based on original short stories from contemporary French Canadian authors. Each drama delves into a specific topic relevant to today's youth and is designed to encourage students to express their views and opinions. The series also allows teachers and students to explore the language of the short story (creating a setting, plot development and denouement) as well as that of film (dialogue, colour, set and costume design and sound) and will inspire students to write their own stories and develop an appreciation for modern literature. "Nouvelles à l'écran" features well-known Quebec actors, including Monique Mercure, Anne Dorval and Patrick Labbé. A teacher's guide and an anthology of the original stories complement the series.

For intermediate and senior students, TVO has "Paroles d'échanges" 1 and 2. Each series of four 30-minute dramatizations offers students an authentic slice of modern-day French Canadian life and culture. Guided by four English-speaking teenagers of various backgrounds on exchange trips in Quebec, students learn to master the complexities of everyday, practical French. These video series encourage discussion of topics such as the emotional impact of adapting to a new environment, resolving social conflict and coping with the pressures of adolescence. "Paroles d'échanges" 1 and 2 are accompanied by a teacher's guide and workbook containing lesson plans and exercises for reproduction.

Children won't want to miss a day at "Rigolécole". Created primarily for French immersion grades 1 through 3, this visually appealing series of 20 10-minute programs uses a lively mix of music, humour, graphics and puppet characters. Madame l'Institutrice and her three students — Tête de ringuette, Jean-Jacques-Jules and Poisson — introduce children to a variety of themes — visiting the zoo, composing a letter and preparing for a class picnic, for instance — while helping them to improve their language and comprehension skills. "Rigolécole" features original stories and illustrations, word games and puzzles to encourage participation. Children also learn to appreciate the social values of friendship, sharing and co-operation as they follow the daily adventures of the three pupils. Supplementary materials include a teacher's guide, an anthology of the stories and an audiocassette of songs. A puppet-making kit is also available. ■

For more information call TVO's Client Services toll-free at 1-800-668-9974 or (416) 484-2600, extension 2665, or fax (416) 484-4425.

tvo

WHAT LANGUAGE FOR Marconi?

ANDRÉE LACROIX

Efforts at francization of enterprises in Quebec have had good results.

Guglielmo Marconi, who succeeded in 1901 in establishing the first wireless link across the ocean between Cornwall, England, and Newfoundland, spoke Italian.

But the employees of the Canadian Marconi Company (CMC), which was founded by the inventor whose name still conjures up the world of telecommunications, work in English and in French.

This highly prosperous firm had an annual turnover, as of March 31, 1993, of $304.9 million. While its success is due in large part to the quality of the systems and components it manufactures in the fields of communications, avionics and radar, it is also attributable to the fact that the company knows how to make good use of the language and other skills of its employees.

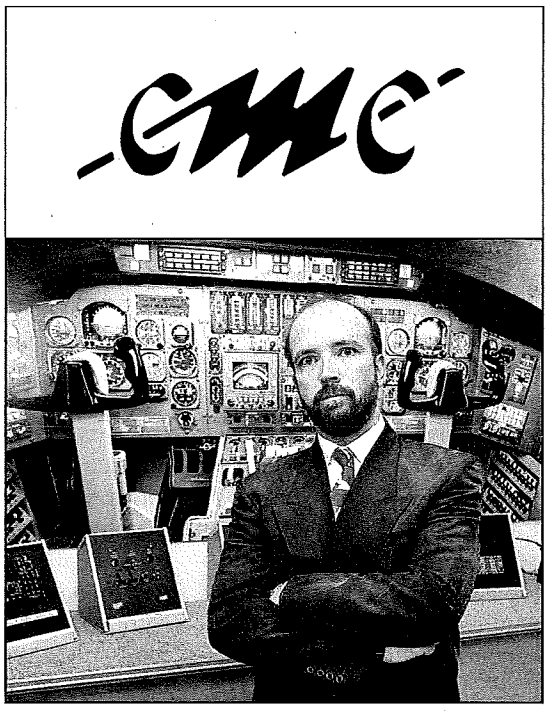
Human resources are important to the 90 year-old firm, which has weathered, with its employees in Quebec, 15 years marked by efforts at francization.

In 1978 CMC became a member of the Business Linguistic Centre (BLC), which then developed a francization program tailor-made for its situation.

Since Marconi exports 80% of its production, it benefits from a special arrangement that allows it to carry on activities in English. Internally, management communicates with employees in the language of their choice but, insofar as possible, it provides French-speaking employees with a French work environment.

The workers at the plant, most of whom are French speakers, work in French without difficulty. However, many French courses have been offered to English-speaking managers and support staff.

"For a number of years French courses were given by teachers from a school board. Demand among staff was so high at that time that an employee of Canadian Marconi was appointed to be responsible for these courses," explains



Jacques Larivière

A work environment where the language rights of employees are respected.

Jacques Larivière, Administrator, Francization and Translation.

The groups are now smaller, and no one is solely responsible for language training. Canadian Marconi calls upon the skills of the BLC to give French courses to its English-speaking employees on the company's premises and at its expense.

The need for bilingual staff at CMC is obvious. First of all, 1,200 of its 2,300 employees work at its headquarters in Montreal. CMC also has plants in Kanata and Cornwall, Ontario, and various branches across Canada. The company also has capabilities in product development, sales and technical support through Micronav International Inc., a Canadian co-enterprise located in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and its two American subsidiaries.

Many employees who had asked to attend the courses in the latest sessions already spoke French quite well, but, according to Jacques Larivière, they had some difficulty writing it. Two groups were formed: one consisting of advanced students and the other of students at the intermediate level.

"The students had been evaluated very well at the beginning," said Larivière. "So no time was wasted. The teachers were very stimulating and used good teaching methods. The employees were extremely satisfied with the courses."

Larivière says that the Canadian Marconi Company participated regularly in symposiums and seminars organized by the BLC because this enabled management to learn about current topics related to francization and make its views on various subjects known.

As part of the francization program, all documents relating to personnel — job descriptions, administrative documents, forms and lists of procedures — have been translated.

Since the company makes avionics equipment, it has also joined the aerospace and aeronautics sectoral committee established by the BLC, which has looked after coordinating the work, the agenda and follow-up on issues.

"Together we prepared a glossary that will be published in December. It is concerned mainly with the manufacture of electronic equipment," Larivière says.

The BLC has also encouraged companies in the sector to draw up an inventory of technical and professional courses offered to staff and to share the list of such courses, as well as to compare the progress of francization.

Thanks to its co-operation with the BLC and its own openmindedness, the Canadian Marconi Company has become a work environment where the language rights of employees are respected and a firm that is carving out a bigger place in the sun for itself on the world market. ■

(Our translation)

Photo: Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

*SARAH HOOD**

It is hard to express the outrage of the trilingual, well-travelled German academic on discovering that a first-class hotel in the centre of downtown Toronto is unable to serve its guests in any language other than English. Ironically, the occasion of her visit was an international conference entitled "Multilingualism in an Interdependent World: European and North American Perspectives", presented by the Goethe-Institut Toronto and The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), from September 9 to 11, 1993.

Following up on an idea of Wilfried Scheffler, Director of the Goethe-Institut, some 100 participants, many of them international researchers, gathered to discuss such issues as communications, human rights, education and business, in terms of multilingualism — or the lack of it — in our modern world. The image of the Tower of Babel, with its chaos of tongues, arose again and again in discussions of bilingual, multicultural Canada, the nine-language bureaucracy of the European Union (EU) or the many and parallel situations of minority language groups in the western world.

The crumbling Tower of Babel, the collapsing Berlin Wall: these herald the advent of the global age. When all world languages come into daily and inevitable contact, what new responsibilities, what novel freedoms, will ensue? Will bi- and trilingualism become inevitable for every business? Are we about to see the absorption and extinction of hundreds of "non-competitive" languages, perhaps to the advantage of some variant of English? Will new technologies and educational techniques allow for their preservation and reintroduction? Or will we perhaps ultimately give up traditional written and spoken language in favour of artificial communication?

Appropriately enough, the first of two keynote addresses was delivered by Maxwell Yalden, former Commissioner of Official Languages and Ambassador to Belgium, and now president of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. "The nature of modern societies," he said, "let alone the exigencies of an interdependent world — make it impossible to put all languages on a completely equal footing from the standpoint of public policy.... The task that faces modern states, therefore, is to provide as much scope as possible for linguistic pluralism without either fostering politically unhealthy divisions or imposing crippling administrative burdens."

Ultimately, he pointed out, "there is more to multilingualism than either linguistic viability or economic advantage. The symbolic value of any language, for speakers of that language, goes far beyond questions of public utility or commercial strategy."

This point was movingly illustrated by the second keynote speaker, Gordon Peters, the Toronto Regional Vice–Chief for the Ontario Assembly of First Nations. Peters spoke feelingly of his own situation as an Aboriginal Canadian who is only now, in his adulthood, learning the language that was his grandparents' tongue. In fact, the majority of Canadian Aboriginal languages are in danger of disappearing over the next generation, since there are few remaining speakers, fewer trained teachers, scarcely any grammar texts and, in some cases, no writing system.

Over the ensuing two days equally compelling speakers addressed questions relating to such themes as "Political Rights and Language Policy", "Language Minorities", "Uniformisation and the Global Language", "Media and the Collapse of National Boundaries" and "The Role of Education in an Interdependent World".

The juxtaposition of European and Canadian models was fascinating. In one session Alison D'Anglejan of the University of Montréal and Joachim Born of Mannheim's Institut für Deutsche Sprache discussed issues relating to "Language and the Workplace" in their different contexts.

D'Anglejan discussed the increasing need for literacy generally in all work-

* **Sarah Hood is a partner in Cadmus Communications, a Toronto company specializing in cross-cultural projects.**

places, especially since the integration of computers into almost every type of job. In particular, she pointed out that, whereas Canada has (at least in theory) provided for a continuing supply of English-French bilingual workers, it has neglected the growing demand for other language knowledge, particularly that of Pacific Rim languages.

"It is paradoxical that after years of neglect, during which they were relegated to the domains of the home and the immediate community, Canada's immigrant languages are now beginning to be perceived as a natural resource with economic potential," she said. "Ideally, this should open up employment possibilities for immigrants who have not mastered the official languages but who can contribute, through their native languages and professional skills, to economic development." D'Anglejan sees the responsibility as falling upon the private sector, which has not thus far been a leader in creating opportunities for language acquisition.

Joachim Born colourfully illustrated some of the practical considerations involved in the administration of the nine-headed linguistic hybrid that is the European Union. "Civil servants must speak two EU languages," he explained. "These could be Dutch and Portuguese — but, ultimately, they are always English and French", a fact that is particularly displeasing to the German press. Another complaint levelled at the bureaucracy is its tendency to create a jargon-ridden, technocratic "communityspeak".

Born believes that early education in two foreign languages should become the norm for most people in the EU, and that English should be the second of the two, "since there's no motivational deficit." He sees a need for change in European models of what is "linguistically polite", and advocates "polyglot dialogue, where everyone speaks their best language, rather than everyone speaking broken English."

Ontario Institute Chair Normand Labrie commented after the conference, "I think it succeeded in bringing people together with different views, to see that what we have here with the Free Trade Agreement is comparable with the situation in Europe. For me it confirms one thing — the importance of languages and multilingualism," he continued. "You find out that the reality of both places is multilingual, something we could capitalize on more than we do now, perhaps."

The conference itself was an exercise in functional multilingualism. The languages of participants included English, French, German and Italian. Formal interpretation was not provided; all were encouraged to use their first language and to rely on the receptive language skills of others present.

"I think we demonstrated that a conference can function even without simultaneous translation," commented Labrie. "We were actually surprised that people were there and listened even though the talks were in other languages."

In his opening address OISE Director Arthur Kruger called modern society "a home for as many people as possible, where they can find their own place without losing their own linguistic identity." As the conference itself suggested, in form as well as content, creative co-operation makes that dream a possibility. ■

Photo: Louise Lafontaine

Valerie Whyte, Cécile Aubrey-de-Ville, Sally Andrews, Guy Cousineau, Danielle St-Laurent, Sheila MacDonald

HOW'S YOUR SPELLING?

The dictation contest for its employees begun in 1991 by Agriculture Canada has gone interdepartmental.

In June the Department invited employees of Defence, Multiculturalism and Citizenship, Health and Welfare and the Secretary of State's Department to test their second-language knowledge by holding their own contests. English-speakers were read a French text, and vice versa.

More than 377 participants took part in the elimination round, with 50 finalists (25 English- and 25 French-speaking) chosen, 10 from each department.

Finals were held October 14 in the National Arts Centre, and the winners are:

French dictation for English-speakers

1st Valerie Whyte, *Health and Welfare*
2nd Sheila MacDonald, *Secretary of State*
3rd Sally Andrews, *Multiculturalism and Citizenship*

English dictation for French-speakers

1st Cécile Aubrey-de-Ville, *Health and Welfare*
2nd Danielle St-Laurent, *Multiculturalism and Citizenship*
3rd Guy Cousineau *Agriculture Canada.*

Appropriately enough, on November 3 the six successful spellers received their awards from Victor C. Goldbloom, Commissioner of Official Languages, at the Head Office of Agriculture Canada.

Romania turns to MONTREAL

GILLES LAFRAMBOISE

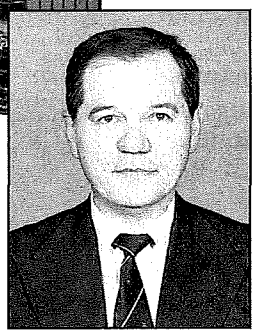
Romania's recent decision to join La Francophonie must have surprised many. Since this country of 24 million people is located in Eastern Europe, it is naturally associated with the other countries of the former Communist bloc.

"The cultural and linguistic situation of the Romanian people is easier to understand when it is compared to that of Quebec," said Valeriu Eugen Pop, the Romanian Ambassador to Canada, in an interview with *Language and Society*. "Just as Quebec is isolated in a sea of English, Romania is surrounded by Slavic countries, but Romanian is a Latin language, like French, Italian and Spanish," he added.

A historic relationship

There is also a long history of relations between Romania and France. Ambassador Pop reminded us that in 1789 a revolution broke out in his country just three days after the uprisings in France. Even in the last century the language of work in the Romanian embassies all over the world was French and not Romanian.

If they wished to be eligible for promotion, military officers left their country to study at St. Cyr, site of the École spéciale militaire de France. At that time Romania also adopted a civil law system based on the Code Napoléon, just as in Quebec.



Valeriu Eugen Pop

"Even under the Communist regime," the ambassador and former minister of the environment explained, "the French language always enjoyed a special status in my country as one of the only two foreign languages taught in school, the other, of course, being Russian."

Since the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime English has enjoyed popularity, but the Romanian preference for the Francophone world is still solidly entrenched. "It is no accident that the first head of state and the first foreign minister to visit the new Romania were François Mitterrand and Roland Dumas, of France," the ambassador said. TV5, the "international" French-language television channel, was also the first foreign network to broadcast its programs in Bucharest, a city of two million.

Even today, according to the ambassador, nearly 20% of all books sold in Romania are in French and courses at the Bucharest polytechnic school are offered in French. In addition, he noted, "a single issue of *Paris Match* or *Science & Vie* is sold and resold over and over because they are the most popular magazines in the country."

The Canadian connection

"In 1989, when we opened our windows to the world, we immediately turned towards the Francophone world, a world that, of course, includes Canada," Ambassador Pop explained.

To develop its new financial and banking system, the Romanian government called upon the Commission des valeurs mobilières du Québec and the Montreal Stock Exchange. These two organizations provided training in French to all the senior officials who will direct the securities agency in Bucharest when it opens its doors next spring; eight Romanians are still receiving training in Montreal to improve their knowledge of the market economy and the capitalist financial system. "For us, it is so much easier to make contact with business people who speak French and with whom we can communicate immediately and without an interlocutor," Ambassador Pop commented.

In his view, these exchanges might also be of benefit to Canadian investors. "If they wish to invest in our country, they will feel at ease there because they will find the same rules as in Montreal."

This is not the only area of expertise that interests Romania. "Between the two world wars," the Ambassador notes, "we also had institutions similar to the caisses populaires in Canada and we would like to relaunch such a co–operative movement with the assistance of your powerful Mouvement Desjardins." ■

(Our translation)