Who took the 'language' out of culture? Uncovering the language of multiculturalism in Canada

Anjali Lowe
University of Victoria

In 2001, almost half of all Canadians reported an origin other than British, French, or Aboriginal. For many communities, language is at the core of ethnic identity. It has long been argued that the two are inextricably linked. The 1971 federal policy of multiculturalism positioned the retention of heritage languages [HLs] as integral to maintaining cultural diversity. Yet as Canada continues to actively promote itself as a multicultural nation, HLs have been neglected by all levels of government. Through a critical analysis of federal discourse, it is demonstrated that federal policy and action have excluded and diminished the value of languages and their role in sustaining multiculturalism. What is more, the lack of support for HLs has demonstrated an attack on culture and the core value of multiculturalism; the creation of an inclusive society that ensures all Canadians access to and participation in Canada's social, cultural and economic institutions.

1 Introduction

To say that Canada is a land of diversity is cliché. From the settlement of the indigenous peoples, the increase in the number of non-Europeans in Canada, speaking a wealth of languages, to the arrival of the French and British colonists, and the waves of immigration, Canada has always been a 'mosaic' of languages and cultures (Fleras & Elliot, 1992);. Canadians have come to see this diversity as central to how Canada defines itself. With the end of discriminatory immigration practices in 1962, immigrants began arriving from all regions of the world, leading to an unprecedented increase in the number of non-Europeans in Canada (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998).

Canada now accepts a near quarter-million immigrants annually, more than half of which bring with them a language other than English or French or *heritage languages* [HLs] (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003). Yet, despite federal and provincial policies and legislation intended to "encourage" the maintenance of HLs, linguistic assimilation is occurring at such a rate that, as a rule, HLs are lost within three generations (Veltman, 1988; Wiley, 1996). Second and third generation Canadians generally do not have communicative competence in the mother tongues of their parents. (O'Bryan, Reitz & Kuplowska, 1975; Pendakur, 1990; Jedwab, 2000). Clearly, the vision of

Canada as a country in which its people speak and use a second or third non-official language as the language of the home (Fleming, 1983) is not in step with the ever-present reality of language shift (Jedwab, 2000; Pendakur, 1990; Veltman, 1988). Nonetheless, at home and abroad, Canada persists in putting forth a public image of a multicultural, multilingual mosaic (Chrétien, 2003). Canadians also distinguish themselves from the melting pot of their southern neighbour, the United States, even though the pressure to assimilate, linguistically and culturally, in Canada essentially runs parallel to the homogenizing forces felt in the United States (Came, 1990; Schrauf, 1999). All levels of government tout their multicultural sensitivity but very little has been done to sustain or advance the values of multiculturalism. The rhetoric is matched with inaction, thus rendering the notion of multiculturalism to a façade.

This paper deals with one of most basic obstacles facing multilingualism in Canada. That is, the lack of a clear and consistent definition of multiculturalism. By means of a critical discourse analysis, I reveal how government sees the role of language in culture, the advancement of the goals of multiculturalism and how its words have been supported by action. I argue that the government's changing definition of 'multiculturalism' has permitted a laissez-faire approach to supporting linguistic diversity which has impaired cultural diversity and its maintenance. Moreover, federal policies and action have excluded and diminished the value of languages and their role in sustaining multiculturalism. The lack of support for HLs on a national level has demonstrated an attack on culture and the other core values of multiculturalism, particularly the creation of an inclusive society that ensures access to and participation in Canada's social, cultural and economic institutions for all Canadians.

2 Language policy for minority languages

Language policies have been, and continue to be, used as device for the repression of languages, cultures and people (Hinton, 2001; Baron, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995). They can prevent a language, even one spoken by a large majority, from being used in schools, commerce, government and media. As a result, when a community does not speak the 'accepted' language, a segment of society is successfully locked out from mainstream economy and public affairs.

Implementing an explicit policy, which makes clear the rights of speakers, can be an effective way of replacing an implicit and repressive policy already existing in practice (Herriman & Burnaby, 1996). Brunn's (1999) study of Mexican migrant children in Illinois demonstrates that the absence of a language policy, in this case a school language policy, can severely restrict the academic achievement and social inclusion of limited-English students in English-only classrooms. This study found that teachers without any grounding in second language acquisition theory, due to a lack of language planning, were unable to contend with issues regarding the integration and instruction of limited-English students in their classrooms. This argument is echoed by

Romaine (2002: 6) who points out that even when there is no specific reference to language, the policy is implicit. That is to say that "most majority languages dominate in domains where they have only *de facto* and no legal status." Conversely, explicit policies, which clearly state the rights of all linguistic groups, can stimulate constructive discussion of language issues, and produce more tolerant language policies (Herriman & Burnaby, 1996).

Fortunately, more and more governments are coming to view languages as resources. In the early 1990s, the Australian government began a national campaign to raise awareness of language as an economic resource and set about instituting programs of second language education. They believed these programs would boost their competitive edge for external trade within Asia and Oceania (Smolicz & Secombe, 2003; Ingram, 1994; Bodi, Marianne, 1993). Australia's Language and Literacy Policy (1991) identifies fourteen national priority languages[1], which are a set of languages endorsed on the basis of either cultural or economic grounds (Ingram, 1994).

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), as well as Jernudd & Das Gupta (1971), argue that the reason that many other countries[2] have not followed the Australian example, giving greater priority to language in resource planning, relates to the intangible nature of human resources. Human resources, though a considerably important aspect of government planning, are frequently neglected due in part to the challenge of measuring their worth (Jernudd, 1971; Thorburn, 1971). Human resources are notoriously difficult to weigh in terms of their benefits and "attendant costs". Moreover, initiatives for human resource development generally exceed the life of a political administration, requiring several generations for implementation and to demonstrate measurable changes in public attitudes and behaviour (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

Romaine (2002) provides a convincing argument that it is the flimsy linkages between policy and planning that have sunk numerous language policies, legislations, conventions and treaties. Citing the case of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1998), she reveals how the deliberately obscure articulation of language rights in the charter, which was intended to provide a legal instrument for language protection, has effectively undermined the entire initiative. The ambiguous language, which was used so that state governments could tailor the charter to their individual contexts, leaves open the definition of complex terms such as 'European cultural tradition' and 'territorial base' to the discretion of each country. The failure to clarify these terms has empowered states to exploit these definitions and exclude certain linguistic minorities from the charter altogether.

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[1] Ingram (1994: 80) lists fourteen languages: Aboriginal language, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. It is important to note that he also lists 'Aboriginal languages' as the first of these priority languages, which is wholly inaccurate and diminishes the importance of the more than 200 indigenous languages spoken in Australia.

[2] This is particularly true of English dominant countries which are in a fortunate position for the moment, as English has arguably become the global lingua franca for trade and diplomacy (Maurais & Morris, 2003).

In other cases, tokenistic policy is introduced with no follow-up substantive action. It is not uncommon to find examples of minority languages being raised to 'official' status, but to a status that comes without the power to be used in the public domain including education, public administration or media. Additionally, implementation of policies can be made impossible without adequate funding, materials, teacher training and knowledge about language issues. This is often typified by parental trepidation about their children not acquiring the dominant language, and elites and majority language speakers fearing the loss of their social status (Romaine, 2002).

While Romaine (2002) admits that her argument could be "unduly pessimistic", the essence of her argument is valid. By and large, policy can be seen as either 'symbolic' or 'substantive' (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Peddie, 1991). Symbolic policies aim to 'make people feel good', though the actual policy directives are often 'nebulous' and 'vague'. Substantive policy, on the other hand, takes 'specific steps' to make the policy a reality (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Therefore, it is not that language policy is inherently incapable of improving the language situation of endangered languages but that a policy without clarity, planning, implementation, public or speaker support, resources, or the legal instruments for reinforcement is being set up for failure.

In the last twenty years, indigenous peoples have found innovative ways to use language policies and planning to breathe life back into their languages, particularly when introduced through bottom-up, grassroots projects (Hinton & Hale, 2001). Unlike the almost 50 indigenous languages facing extinction, languages brought to Canada by recent immigrants will not disappear completely since they are generally still spoken in their countries of origin (Hinton, 2003). Nonetheless, concerns about the sustainability of languages in the adoptive country are realistic and rightfully justifiable (Herriman & Burnaby, 1996; Hinton, 2001). The policy successes of aboriginal language revitalization (some of which will be discussed in 2.3) have resulted in greater optimism and the expectation that governments can use policy to develop the "political, geographical and economic factors that support the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity" (Romaine, 2002: 21).

3 Language policy in Canada

Though language policy has historically been exploited as an instrument of oppression of minority languages (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, for further discussion), it is increasingly being considered an effective tool for the promotion and encouragement of HLs (Hinton, 2001; Hornberger, 1998). This was demonstrated by the elevation of the prestige and use of French, an official language in Canada since Confederation, through a vigorous policy of promotion.

In the early sixties, the Quiet Revolution, a movement to secure greater power in the francophone province of Quebec and representation federally, provided a platform for the rise of a number of independence groups and eventually escalated to domestic political violence and serious threats of

secession (Warren, 2003). In 1963, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, faced with precarious tensions between Canada's two largest language communities, formed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism [RCBB] to investigate and "report on the state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada" (RCBB, 1967: Appendix I). The Commission was asked to examine bilingualism in federal institutions as well as in the system of education although it was not under federal but provincial authority (RCBB, 1967). Furthermore, the government requested that the Commission recommend the necessary steps to "develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races" while also "taking into account the contribution made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and measures to safeguard that contribution" (RCBB, 1967: Appendix I).

The series of reports issued by the RCBB from 1967 to 1970 spoke boldly of the fact that Francophones, in Quebec and in Canada at large, were being sidelined in education (RCBB, 1968) and employment[3] (RCBB, 1969; MacMillan, 2003). The Commission's distressing findings prompted a number of major initiatives such as the integration of official minority languages into the school curriculum (Yee & Sodhi, 1991; Commissioner of Official Languages, 1971) and the removal of barriers to promotion in the public service (Commissioner of Official Languages, 1971). Even before the completion of the massive six volume study, the federal government, anticipating the recommendations of the Commission, declared that English and French would have equal status as the two official languages of Canada (Commissioner of Official Languages, 1971; Official Languages Act, 1969).

During 1965, the members of the Commission held hearings across the country to gather input from all Canadians (RCBB, 1967: Appendix II). In these meetings, Ukrainian-Canadians were some of the most vocal of ethnic groups, presenting thirty-seven briefs in total to the Commission (Martorelli, 1990; RCBB, 1965). While Ukrainians and other minorities accepted that logistically Canada would have two official languages, English and French, they questioned the idea that Canada had 'two founding races'. They stood strongly against a 'bicultural' identity which ignored the contributions of the many groups that migrated to Canada early in its history and who had been instrumental in "clear[ing] and open[ing] great stretches of territory in Northern Ontario and the Prairies" (RCBB, 1965: 126). Moreover, they feared that official biculturalism would reduce non-British and non-French to second-class citizens, stripped of their basic rights (RCBB, 1965).

The Commissioners felt the unease of these words and raised alarm in Book IV of their reports, putting forth sixteen recommendations relating to ethno-linguistic and ethno-cultural maintenance with three of the directives dealing directly with the public system of education. An unequivocal link was drawn between language and culture, and it was proposed that more advanced instruction in languages other than English or French be offered where there was

[3] For instance, Francophones were under-represented in federal institutions and it was found that Francophones made up a greater proportion of the lowest salary group (23.9%) than the highest (10.4%) (Figures from (RCBB, 1969) cited in MacMillan, 2003: 91).

sufficient demand (RCBB, 1969; Bublick, 1978). The fourth volume of the RCBB, *The Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups*, made it clear that the Commission envisioned a wealth of diversity sustained within a bilingual framework with language as its vehicle, thus "safeguard[ing] the contribution that [the] languages [could] make to the quality of Canadian life" (RCBB, 1970: 141).

Less than two years later, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau responded to Book IV and declared that Canada would be a model of 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' (Trudeau, 1971), becoming "the first country in the world to adopt an official multiculturalism policy" (Canadian Heritage, 2002a: 3). There were four principal objectives of the policy:
(i) To assist cultural groups to grow and contribute to Canada, (ii) To assist cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers, (iii) To promote creative exchanges among all Canadian cultural groups, and (iv) To assist immigrants in acquiring at least one of the official languages (Trudeau, 1971).

Though policy implementation was contingent on sufficient government funding, "nearly $200 million was set aside in the first decade of the policy for special initiatives in languages and cultural maintenance" (Library of Parliament, 1999: 4). This policy was then set in motion with the appointment of a Minister of State for Multiculturalism and the establishment of a body to represent the interests of Canada's multicultural communities, the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism [CCCM], which immediately lobbied the federal government for financial support of HLs (CCCM, 1975: Appendix A). The government eventually conceded, and in 1975 approved a small budget of $60,000 for 'non-official teaching aids' (Hobbs et al., 1991).

The government, having admitted responsibility for the promotion of HLs under its policy of multiculturalism, demonstrated to policymakers that, in its eyes, culture and language were undeniably and intricately connected. This interpretation of the policy set the stage for another development, the Cultural Enrichment Program. This brought modest support, to the tune of 10% of operating costs, directly to communities for HL instruction during non-school hours, generally on Saturday mornings (Cummins, 1994; CCCM, 1977). Despite public resistance to the government funding of HL teaching (Berry et al., 1977; Cummins & Danesi, 1990), financial support continued to increase. From the period of 1973-1975 to 1981-1984, the proportion of the multiculturalism grants allocated to HLs increased almost seven-fold, from 3% to 20% (Stasiulis, 1988). More than three million dollars in funding was granted to 863 schools teaching 58 languages across Canada during the 1986/87 school year (Canadian Ethnocultural Council, 1988).

This growing awareness of HLs and cultures culminated in the 1988 Multiculturalism Act of Canada (Bill C-93), a more developed adaptation of the previous policies which reaffirmed the federal government's intent to encourage the participation of all individuals in Canadian society, to promote multiculturalism and to "*preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada*" (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988). In essence, the

Multiculturalism Act had two objectives, the first being the survival of the ethnic groups and their culture and the second being a tolerance of this diversity and an absence of prejudice toward ethnic minorities. Soon after, the act to establish the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship (C-18) was passed, a move considered to be a significant recognition of fundamental position that cultural diversity held in Canadian citizenship (Multiculturalism & Citizenship Canada [MCC], 1990: 1).

On the recommendations of the RCBB regarding "non-official" languages, the government also began sponsoring forums for discussion of language issues (Cummins, 1984) and commissioned a number of studies on the topic of the HL maintenance, language programs and attitudes towards multiculturalism (Berry et al., 1977; O'Bryan et al., 1986; Geva & Salerno, 1986; Pendakur, 1990). However, as HL research gained strong momentum (O'Bryan et al., 1986; Cummins, 1983, 1984; Cummins & Danesi, 1990; Swain & Lapkin, 1991; Yee & Sodhi, 1991), the funding for HL programs slowed to a standstill. Support for HL supplemental schools ceased "as a part of more general fiscal belt-tightening" (Cummins, 1994: 436), the Cultural Enrichment Program was eliminated, though it was promised to be replaced by new initiatives (Yee & Sodhi, 1991). In its final year, the Supplementary School Assistance Program supported 1,763 schools teaching 62 languages to 142,879 children across the country (MCC, 1990). And finally, in 1991, the federal government passed Bill C-37, which pledged the creation of a national HL institute in Edmonton. The institute, with an annual budget of $1.3 million for five years (MCC, 1990), would fulfil the mandate of supporting the acquisition, maintenance and use of mother tongues across the country (Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act, 1991), but more than ten years later, this legislation has yet to be financed.

The MCC Annual Reports from 1988/89 to 1991/92 describe the support and funding of specific activities on the national and regional levels including seminars and workshops and language programs supported "under a formula for partial funding" (MCC, 1989: 25), though by 1993, on page one of the 1992/93 Annual Report, language maintenance is decisively excluded from the objectives of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (Canadian Heritage, 1994).

Multiculturalism, particularly the teaching of HLs, continues to be a contentious issue with Canadians. In the second reading of Bill C-53 (1994) to create the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Queen's opposition (the Reform Party) challenged not only the new department but the value of multiculturalism at all.

> *(i) Canadians remain unsure of what multiculturalism is, what it is trying to do and why and what it can accomplish in a free and democratic society such as ours. Multiculturalism can encompass folk songs, dance, food, festivals, arts and crafts, museums, heritage languages, ethnic studies, ethnic presses, race relations, culture sharing and human rights. Much of the opposition to multiculturalism results from the indiscriminate application of the term to a wide range of situations,*

> *practices, expectations and goals, as well as its institutionalization as state policy, an expensive one at that* (Brown, 1994).

In the statement above, Brown (Calgary Southeast) makes a sound argument that the federal policy of multiculturalism has been exceedingly vague. Its lack of direction has made possible the financing of some questionable pursuits (though Brown may, or may not, be including language learning in this category of 'questionable pursuits'), all in the name of multiculturalism.

Since 1971, Canada has leapt forward. It initiated, and for a time, helped to sustain HL research and education across the country. Burnaby (1996: 218) reiterates, that "we have much to be proud of in terms of racial and ethnic tolerance and its implications for language [but] the glass is still half empty at least." In fact, the federal government's elusive concept of multiculturalism has done little for Canada's other minority languages. Though they subsidized non-official language learning, federal officials never formally stated that the culture-language connection was also true for languages other than French. Stasiulis (1988: 87) sums up the facts quite nicely:

> *(ii) The fact remains that successive federal governments have never thrown their resources, legislation, nor the prestige of the Prime Minister's Office behind multilingualism (or, for that matter, multiculturalism) in the way that the Trudeau government, obviously, did for bilingualism. Nothing demonstrates better the lop-sided relationship between the federal government's support of official and non-official language instruction than the disparity in financial support for multilingualism and bilingualism. During 1986-87, $3.83million was spent on heritage and modern (third) language training, while over $218 million was allocated to 'Official Languages in Education'.*

From its conception, the official policy of Multiculturalism has been an issue of considerable contention. Bissoondath (1994), for instance, argues that the policy and the subsequent Multiculturalism Act (1988) have done little for minority culture and language, Balkanizing communities rather than bringing them together. It has also been argued that cultural and language maintenance inhibits the learning of an official language as well as integration into Canadian society (Lieberson, 1970). While the 1971 policy was arguably introduced as a device to quell minority group backlash over the declaration of English and French as official languages (Burnaby, 1996), its effect has been far-reaching.

Today, 'multiculturalism' underlies the Canadian political agenda and though it is highly politicized, the results of the policy are difficult to deny. 'Multiculturalism' is now a well-established word in Canadian households; it is considered fundamental to Canadian's definition of self. There is a "society-wide acceptance" of the basic premises of multiculturalism--that Canada is a racially and culturally diverse country in which people are free to practice their own cultural traditions without prejudice (Cardozo & Musto, 1997: 13). This

now has translated into more diverse faces in advertising and media, cultural sensitivity training in the workplace and in schools, and a more tolerant society. However, while Canadian society tolerates, accepts, and perhaps even values multiculturalism, the meaning encompassed in this concept still remains elusive.

4 The language of federal multiculturalism

4.1 The Canadian Multiculturalism Act

The Multiculturalism Act is framed in the context of the Official Languages Act (1969), the Canadian Human Rights Act (1982), and other international agreements on civil rights and the elimination of racial discrimination, all of which deal with discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion or *language*. One such international agreement cited in the preamble to the Act, the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, states that "persons belonging to ethnic, religious or *linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture***,** to profess and practice their own religion *or to use their own language*"[4] (Canadian Multiculturalism Act [CMA], 1988). Yet in the same preamble, the Government of Canada prefaces its own policy by "recogniz[ing] the diversity of Canadians as regards to race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society" (CMA, 1988), making *no* mention of linguistic diversity. Given the human rights assurances, including those of language guaranteed in the preamble, it seems logical that the Government would also recognize the diversity of languages as being a 'fundamental characteristic of Canadian society'. Though the government presents international covenants which view language as a right, it was clearly not prepared to acknowledge the diversity of languages in Canada, let alone recognize them as a "fundamental" feature of the Canadian population.

The policy of the Act is set out in ten principles, the first declares it the government's responsibility to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society" (CMA, 1988). Here, a working definition of 'multiculturalism' can be surmised from the statement that Canada's "racial and cultural diversity" is a reflection of "multiculturalism" and thus it can be inferred that "racial and cultural diversity" are always understood. Most Canadians would not hesitate to include 'racial diversity' in their definition of multiculturalism, particularly in lieu of the fact that the official face of multiculturalism consists of reflecting the multi-racial reality on the covers of government reports, booklets, and other publications. However, while 'racial diversity' appears to be fairly straightforward, the meaning of 'cultural diversity', and particularly its relationship to linguistic diversity, is still under debate (Fishman, 1999).

Even after the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism's [RCBB] recommendation that 'ethnic' languages be taught in elementary

[4] Italics used here and for the remainder of the paper are my own.

schools and their explicit statement that language was the vehicle which would safeguard cultural diversity for future generations, Trudeau's official policy of multiculturalism did not reiterate the linkages between a culture and its language. The government, however, was later forced to admit that language maintenance would be instrumental in sustaining multiculturalism. It seemed that the debate would be settled in the Multiculturalism Act, especially after the Standing Committee of Multiculturalism also declared that the policy would be ineffectual without serious attention to language. After the incessant debate, it seemed necessary that the new Multiculturalism Act make explicit the government's understanding of 'culture'. That is, was language a part of culture, necessary for its maintenance, or were language and culture distinct without consequence for the other? Unfortunately, the Act did not elucidate the relationship between language and culture; as a result, the overlying notion of multiculturalism has remained tenuous and vague.

Section 3 of the Act declares it the responsibility of the Government of Canada to recognize and promote the understanding that it is the right of Canadians to "preserve, enhance and share their *cultural heritage*." Yet the meaning of 'cultural heritage' remains indefinable as it is not clear what exactly constitutes 'cultural heritage'. Does it refer to food, music, art, literature, dance, and dress – traditional and modern? Does it include systems of belief, ideology or religion? And does it include or exclude language? Nowhere in the Act does the government make clear its interpretation of 'culture'. This omission has serious consequences for languages other than English or French, as the ambiguous expression of the Act allows 'language' to be both included and excluded from the definition of culture. Thus, the ill-defined concepts of 'culture' and 'multiculturalism' vary with each government, political party, and government report, being redefined to strengthen a host of political ideologies and agendas.

The policy objectives of the Act continually make reference to multiculturalism "as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity" which "provides an invaluable resource in shaping Canada's future" (CMA, 1988: 3.1.b). The government is responsible for ensuring that "social, cultural, economic and political institutions [are] respectful and inclusive of Canada's *multicultural* character" (CMA, 1988: 3.1.f) Yet how is the government expected to "advance *multiculturalism*" (CMA, 1988: 3.1.j), "encourag[ing] the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the *multicultural* heritage of Canada" (CMA, 1988: 5.1.d) or even review the operations of the *Multiculturalism* Act without an unequivocal or consensual understanding of 'culture' or the concept of multiculturalism? This case shows a parallel with the earlier example of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (see Section 2.1) as the primary goal was undermined through the use of obscure and undefined terminology (Romaine, 2002). The use of deliberately vague language in terminology and in defining its responsibilities allows the government to escape culpability--past, present or future.

The Act outlines the approach to be taken in implementing its policy goals, stating that the Minister may take the measures that he/she "considers appropriate" in implementing the Act. The Act asks the Minister to:

> *(iii)Encourage and assist individuals, organizations and institutions to project the multicultural reality. (5.1a)*
> *Encourage and promote exchanges and cooperation among the diverse communities. (5.1c)*
> *Encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada. (5.1e)* (CMA, 1988).

These procedures for implementation (above) are weakened by the vague imprecise language in which they are stated. Even if it is contested that the mandate is not being fulfilled, the language of the Act promises no commitment to the implementation or the success of the policy. In the case of 5.1.e, *Encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada,* neither assistance (5.1.a) nor promotion (5.1.c) are promised, simply a very passive *encouragement*.

It is in the second to last item in the list of measures of implementation that the Act finally contends with the issue of language. Although the 'language' is relegated to the end of the list, its objective of "*facilitat[ing] the acquisition, retention and use of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada*" is clear (CMA, 1988: 5.1.f). The government's role in this strategy of implementation is phrased straightforwardly. A conscious decision is evident not to preface this statement with word 'encourage', (i.e., 'encourage and facilitate' or 'encourage the preservation of…'), which diminishes the force of the other policy statements. The Act, however, fails to articulate an explicit connection between the "acquisition, retention and use" of languages and the implementation of a policy of 'multiculturalism'. Nonetheless, though the connection is implicit, it may be reasoned that if language maintenance is a strategy for the realization of the multiculturalism policy, it must then follow that the Act's working definition of multiculturalism necessarily includes linguistic diversity. By any definition, language is not a component of 'race', thus language must be encompassed within the interpretation of 'culture', and from this point forward, it will be assumed that the authors of the Act were of the same opinion.

4.2 The annual reports and other federal discourse

Eight of the sixteen recommendations in the RCBB's *Book IV: On the Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups* dealt specifically with languages other than French and English [LOFE]. The Commission was unequivocal in their belief that language and culture were interdependent. Moreover, they insisted that public schools were essential to the safeguarding of "other" cultures and directed the government to incorporate LOFE into the regular school day.

Prime Minister Trudeau's 1971[5] speech made it clear that Canada was to have no official culture, but two official languages, English and French. Essentially, the policy recognized the multiplicity of cultures and the need to maintain them, but did so without any reference to 'language', failing "to address the linkage between culture and language, [denying] an essential element of self-identification for many ethnic groups" (Hudson, 1987: 64).

The federal government continued to ignore the RCBB's recommendations and did not assert an opinion on the language issue until the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism [CCCM] directed the government to integrate LOFE into the public school system. Eventually the government conceded that there was a link between language and culture and provided some funding for LOFE. But even then, the federal government did not "encourage" the provincial governments to incorporate LOFE in the classrooms (as had been done with French). Instead they gave a nominal subsidy to the communities themselves for supplemental HL classes under the Cultural Enrichment Program.

By 1987, the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism [SCM] set up to examine the multiculturalism policy, clearly expressed their views on the ineffectiveness of the aging policy. "The Multiculturalism Policy of 1971", they wrote, "is clearly insufficient and out of date. It does not have the ability to respond to the needs of today's multicultural society. There is a sense that this 15-year-old policy is floundering. It needs clear direction" (Canada, 1987: Preface).

The SCM argued that while the Charter of Rights and Freedoms had previously been revised to include a clause requiring and that it be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians, it did not provide a legislative base for the multiculturalism policy which could support programs, a minister, or a department. Moreover, the policy did not even describe how it was to be implemented. Key to SCM's solution for saving the 'floundering' policy was the enactment of the policy, stating that "it [was] time to further recognize the multicultural reality of Canada by giving [the] reality its own legislative base" (Canada, 1987: 18). Furthermore, the SCM argued for the "complementary nature of bilingualism and multiculturalism" citing the 1985 Official Languages Annual Report which endorsed multiculturalism and openly supported HL teaching (Canada, 1987: 19).

Following the SCM report, the Multiculturalism Act was passed with the preservation and enhancement of languages other than English and French as one of the fundamental principles of the Act. 'Language' was linked to 'culture' (albeit implicitly) in the Act and was promoted as such in talk and action by the new Minister of Multiculturalism. This implicit connection is evidenced by the funding of HL supplementary schools, and the passing of the bill to create the Canadian Heritage Language Institute [CHLI]. Support for the belief that HLs

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[5] It took two full years before the federal government responded to Book IV, and unlike the Official Language Policy which was quickly enacted, the multiculturalism policy was not put into law until 1988, more than 15 years later (Canada, 1987).

played an essential role in cultural maintenance and in breaking down of cultural barriers continued until about 1991. This was the year that the Cultural Enrichment program was cut, the CHLI failed received the funding it had been promised, and the words "heritage languages" ceased to appear in the annual reports.

In the First Report of the Operations of the Multiculturalism Act, the new minister of Multiculturalism uses bold language, pledging "an active and energetic multiculturalism" (MCC, 1989: Forward). Remaining faithful to the commitments of the CMA, the minister sets out four policy directions to be the focus of funding and support: *Race Relations*, *Heritage Cultures and Languages*, *Community Support and Participation* and *Cross Government Commitment*. The Heritage Cultures and Languages Program aimed to assist Canadians in "preserving and enhancing" their rich cultural heritage (MCC, 1989: 25). It is apparent that in the 1988/89 Report that HLs were considered an essential part of 'cultural heritage.' 'Language' is plainly stated as a key component of Multiculturalism and as "one of the main vehicles through which a culture is expressed," affirming one of the goals of the Multiculturalism Act itself—to "preserve and enhance the use of the languages other than English and French" (MCC, 1989: 25). Even the program which partially funds HL classes was called the *Cultural* Enrichment Program. The report also describes the creation of a new department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, a "crucial development in the citizenship and national identity aspects of nation building," affirming the inextricable link between language and culture (MCC, 1989: 3).

Conversely, since 1991, the federal government has avoided all discussion of Canada's wealth of linguistic diversity and its array of languages other than French or English being taught in schools (in public and separate school boards, at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels and during regular and weekend programs). At the same time, the government never hesitates to tout Canada as 'diverse' and 'multicultural', flaunting its 'cultural mosaic' while consistently neglecting to mention its linguistic mosaic and its non-existent support of the languages of Canada's many cultures. The government continues to support dance, music and food festivals but has discontinued support for one of the most tangible components of culture.

More recently, talk of 'language' is erratic and is generally non-existent except in some vague reference to 'linguistic diversity'. Moreover, the Ministry of Canadian Heritage refuses to support the development of language resources or to reaffirm the culture-language link set out by previous governments. In the introduction of the 1999/2000 Annual Report, the Minister of Canadian Heritage describes Canada as "a microcosm of all the world's "ethnic, religious, *linguistic* and racial diversity" (Canadian Heritage, 2001: 1). In the next pages, she quotes the Prime Minister [PM] Jean Chrétien's speech in Berlin where he echoes the words of his minister, calling Canada "a post-national multicultural society…contain[ing] the globe within its borders" (Canadian Heritage, 2001: 3). The PM stresses how "Canadians have learned that their *two* international languages and their diversity are a comparative advantage" (Canadian Heritage, 2001: 3).

There is an intrinsic contradiction in these statements which tells the tale for the government's rapport with its *non-official* languages. While the minister advertises Canada's ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, the PM tells Germany that Canada has *two* languages. He does not suggest that Canada has two official languages. Instead he says that Canada has *only* two languages and some formless diversity which, depending on the speaker, can include or exclude linguistic diversity.

In an Orwellian fashion, HL maintenance was excluded as a principle of multiculturalism (an about turn from the interpretation of the Act from the previous two decades). While the federal powers may not be out to simply secure party loyalty, it is evident that they have attempted to control the public's understanding of 'multiculturalism'. Moreover, they have acted systematically to tear 'language' from 'culture', thus restricting 'multiculturalism' to only those meanings that fit within its ideology.

5 The results of the federal discourse on multiculturalism

5.1 Language as a resource?

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act clearly sets "the preserv[ation] and enhance[ment]" of HLs as fundamental to the safeguarding of Canada's cultures (CMA, 1988: 3.1.i). Though support for HLs was always in the context of "strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada" (CMA, 1988: 3.1.i), the government demonstrated an interest in language maintenance early on, though nowhere near as dedicated a policy as that towards the official languages. Contrary to the statement that official languages needed to be "*strengthen[ed] [in] status,*" there was no equivalent statement for HLs, from which it may be inferred that it was believed that HLs had already been given sufficient status.

It is important to consider the words chosen to describe the federal responsibility in the Act, particularly those of 'preservation' and 'enhancement'. *Preserve*, for instance, is a term used to describe what it done to something dead and obsolete to prevent it from decay, whether a flower, a body or a language such as Latin, something that one cannot get back. The Act implies that the official languages needed to gain "status", while HLs, which were "old-fashioned", did not. Moreover, it seems that it was, and still is, preferred to just to *preserve* their marginal status in society.

The 2001/02 Report on the Multiculturalism Act highlights the need for federal institutions to "respect Canada's multicultural character and reflect the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society" (Canadian Heritage, 2002). These words are taken directly from the Multiculturalism Act. However, there is a clear divergence in the interpretation of these words from the 2001/02 Report to the Act itself. The Act interprets "cultural diversity" as including 'linguistic diversity', as demonstrated in Section 3.1.1., and was so interpreted by the governments in power previous to, and at the time, that the Act was enshrined into law, as evidenced by their support for language programs as

perceptible support for 'cultural diversity'. On the contrary, in the 2001/02 Annual Report, the words "cultural diversity" have been purged of their previous meanings, and their new meaning is not altogether clear. Policy directions and programming disregard HLs and push for "linguistic duality". It seems clear that for the government of the time (which is the same at present), "cultural diversity" excludes 'language' from its consideration of ethnic, religious and racial diversity.

Yet, even as the words 'heritage languages' dropped from annual reports, 'language' was still being discussed. It is not uncommon to find a paragraph or two in the annual reports of the 1990s which acknowledge the "valuable economic assets" that have come from support of multiculturalism, such as "knowledge of languages, ways of doing business in other cultures and trade links" that have "provide[d] Canada with a competitive edge" (Canadian Heritage, 1995: 8). Federal ministries must also report their yearly efforts to recognize and reflect "multiculturalism". The Ministry relays this information in its reports, often describing how federal institutions have employed the "special languages skills" of their employees (Canadian Heritage, 1996: 7). However, even the Ministry's spin cannot diminish the importance that HL fluency has played in federal institutions at home and internationally. Numerous federal agencies report how they have made use of employees' language abilities and how such abilities have been invaluable in communicating with potential trade partners, and securing contracts. For instance, the 1995/96 Report describes how the Canadian Grain Commission was able to secure a major contract with the Government of Hungary, "due in large part to [one] Hungarian speaking employee" (Canadian Heritage, 1997: 2).

In spite of HL speakers' contributions to business and government, above and beyond the duties of their positions, there is little recognition of their specialized knowledge. What is more, for the most part, when languages other than English or French are discussed in Canadian Heritage's Annual Reports, it is usually in conjunction with the description of problem to be "managed" or "accommodated"--that is, when important information needs to be either made available or obtained from non-official language speakers. Without fail, in each report, the Ministry congratulates itself on its handling of the "linguistic diversity" of Canadians so that all citizens are able to "participate" in Canadian society. Census data is now often gathered using languages other than English or French. Essential services and informational brochures are increasingly being provided in non-official languages "to better serve Canadian citizens" (Canadian Heritage, 2001: 27). The 1999/2000 Report devotes more than a page to describe how its Ministry keenly recognized that the message of federal government's Family Violence Initiative was not reaching all Canadians, in particular those who spoke neither official language. Consequently, in order to get the anti-violence message to all Canadians, public service announcements were produced in "fourteen international languages" (Canadian Heritage, 2001: 28). It is absurd that after almost thirty years of multiculturalism, one of the most "tangible outputs" for 1999 was the translation of a public service announcement to ensure that minority communities were enlightened on the

topic of domestic violence. The government has not since deemed it necessary to produce additional multilingual broadcasts on other topics, such as environmental issues, voting or even translated *Canadian Heritage Moments*. It is clear that the federal government and particularly the Ministry of Canadian Heritage which is to serve the mandate of the Multiculturalism Act, regard minority communities and their languages as problems or obstacles in the way of trouble-free communication.

Language does not just stand in the way of communication. It also may be perceived as impeding integration into mainstream society. In Section 2.2, it was revealed that parents often have concerns about using their child's mother tongue in the home before he/she enters school. Moreover, when a child has difficulty adjusting to English when beginning school, the problems are almost always attributed to use of the home language. This situation is even the case for French bilingual parents in Ontario, with its fairly large Francophone population. All levels of government have failed to debunk these myths of language learning which seem quite suspect when "official" French-English bilingualism is being actively promoted federally.

Despite the silent depreciation of language learning, French continues to be taught in Anglophone Canada and vice versa. However, most students graduating from such weak forms of bilingual education leave with little more than basic conversational competence (Baker & Jones, 1998). Moreover, instead of the improving attitudes towards French, the current policy is actually accomplishing the opposite, fuelling students' negative feelings and resentment for having studied French without acquiring any real competence (Baker & Jones, 1998). Imagine if students were studying math for five years and still were not able to understand Grade 9 algebra because they had not yet mastered basic Grade 4 arithmetic. This situation is faced by students studying HLs in the school system as well (to be discussed in the next section). If we consider the fact that French language instruction generally does not begin until Grade 4, and that alternatively, there is only a very limited number of immersion classes available, one has to wonder if the federal government has any commitment to language learning at all, not to mention to official bilingualism or multilingualism.

5.2 Tolerance?

> *(iv) We are not trying to achieve a tolerant society. Tolerance is putting up with something, accepting it, living with it because there is no alternative. We have to move beyond tolerance* (Weiner, 1990: 2).

Tolerance, notes Gerry Weiner (cited above), the former Minister of State, Multiculturalism and Citizenship, is not inclusive. Nor is 'tolerance' supportive or promotive. Lenihan and Kaufman (2001), in a paper which came out of a Canadian Heritage Roundtable Series, describe three ways of developing respect for other ethnic, linguistic groups. The first is respect that develops from *tolerance*. Lenihan and Kaufman (2001: 29) revise Weiner's idea

of 'moving beyond tolerance' in their second and third types of respect for diversity. The second is a respect which develops through *understanding* for why "[another's] views may be at odds with one's own." The third type of respect is cultivated through *identification*. In this type, "citizens' personal identities can be viewed as open and dynamic and individuals can transcend their own cultural experience to become what they are not," whereby "someone from one cultural background may participate in the practices and customs of another group" (Lenihan & Kaufman, 2001: 29). This type of respect goes well beyond encouraging citizens to accommodate another's differences through tolerance or even understanding. UNESCO (1994) also argues that the type of respect found through identification can only truly take place through learning a culture's language. Very plainly, language learning must play a vital role in facilitating intercultural learning. If the recent government interpretation of 'culture' and 'ethnicity' were true, then simply by experimenting with "ethnic" cuisine, dance and music, it should be possible to develop genuine respect and understanding for another culture. However, this is by no means the case. The festivals, food fairs, dance, and public awareness campaigns have not fought discrimination. Instead, minorities are facing an increasingly "tolerant" society which is willing to acknowledge that diversity exists, but will neither actively promote nor repress it. This mind-set in no way encourages diversity, by supporting the legitimization of languages other than English or French, nor does it stand against implicit discrimination. Lenihan and Kaufman (2001) state that public recognition is crucial in providing support for efforts to promote individual and institutional openness. The government is privy to this information and in many cases commissioned the research, yet it still ignores language as being integral to Canada's 'diverse' future, not only a basic component of cultural maintenance but also as an extremely powerful weapon against racism.

5.3 Breaking out of 'ethnic' stereotypes?

> *(v) Encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada* (CMA, 1988: 5.1.e).

After 1991, when language was dropped from the advertised concept of multiculturalism, the government solely promoted celebrations of culture such as festival, dance and food fairs. This practice demonstrates the features the government believed to be at the core of multiculturalism or perhaps what was intentionally being marketed as "multiculturalism". The government, in effect commoditised culture. In our "boutique multiculturalism", we accept many cultures, we even promote and support them financially…but stop short of supporting language (Fish, 1997). Even though language has been described[6] as

[6] It has been described as such by the Government of Canada, by Liberals, by Conservatives, by policy analysts, by provincial leaders, by the cultural communities (immigrant and aboriginal and 'founding'), by UNESCO, and even by those trying to eradicate ethnocultural groups.

the vehicle of cultural maintenance as the most salient and tangible feature of culture, the government still refuses to support its teaching or learning, or even recognize it as a vehicle of cultural maintenance for ethnocultural communities as well as weapon in combating racism.

Rather, the government has been unwavering in its approach toward HLs within its policy of multiculturalism and as a result has allowed Bisoondath's (1994) contentions of 'ethnic' stereotyping to be proved correct. Under the heading *Identity: Preserving and Promoting Our Multicultural Heritage*, the 2001/02 Annual Report reasons that by "preserv[ing] and promot[ing] the Canada of yesterday", we can "realize that there are many threads in our historical tapestry" and "understand and embrace the Canada of today" (Canadian Heritage, 2002: 19). In this document, the Ministry reports on the National Archives' new acquisitions relating to a "range of ethnic communities", including "interviews with Ukrainian Canadian communists" and "raw footage of a documentary on a Nazi war criminal" which are supposed to provide "insight" for those wishing to learn about "the diverse peoples of our country" (Canadian Heritage, 2002: 19). While understanding a culture's history is necessary for one to develop respect for that culture, a sheltered representation can feed stereotyping. Removing culture from its context, without its historical, social and linguistic context, "multiculturalism" has not in fact helped Canadians to understand and respect their neighbours (Bissoondath, 1994: 89). Furthermore, the disregard for the multitude of languages as a dynamic force in Canadian identity, has, to all intents and purposes, forced the *preservation* of a static image of Canada's many cultures as folkloric stereotypes of costumes, music, dance and food without import in the modern world.

5.4 Access?

> *(vi) Promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation* (CMA, 1988: 3.1.c)

Tse (1998) points out that HL speakers need language to gain and maintain membership in their respective community, and in turn, to sustain their language and ethnic identity. This is true not simply for those born into a minority ethnocultural groups; it is also true for all Canadians. Language provides access. It is used to show membership or to distance oneself from the group. Second and third generation immigrants often do not have this option. Through language, individuals gain access to the culture of the mainstream communities. For example, police officers who speak HLs will be able to more easily gain access to ethnocultural communities and they will be more quickly trusted. This trust and understanding will allow police officers to do their jobs more efficiently while also promoting intergroup awareness and helping to defuse conflict. Language allows us to gain access to communities outside our borders, culturally and economically. The federal annual reports on

multiculturalism demonstrate that language not only helps us gain access but also shows results in our ability to secure trade links and contracts with non-English, non-French speaking countries.

The federal government purports that it is valuable to have knowledge of languages, often non-traditionally economic languages such as Hungarian or Portuguese (Canadian Heritage, 1996). However, given that their own and other federally commissioned studies tell us that second generation, and as a rule, third generation Canadians, will not have competence in their HL(s) due to the rapid process of cultural and linguistic assimilation in addition to the lack of access to sites in which to acquire a HL, they will not be able to gain access to the many positions that require non-French, non-English language skills. Moreover, they will not have the edge to compete for positions which see 'international' language skills as a bonus. Preference will be given to fluent speakers (generally first generation Canadians) with similar academic and work experience. The federal government continues to insist on the usefulness of cultural knowledge, but does not officially recognize that cultural knowledge is implicit in language knowledge.

The 1995/96 Report account of the Canadian Commercial Corporation [CCC] clearly demonstrates the need and value of language knowledge in international trade. The CCC not only employs a "high" proportion of foreign born Canadians because of their language abilities and cultural knowledge and it regularly reimburses the cost of language programs taken by their employees. Second generation immigrants should have similar knowledge, yet they do not. They have only a fraction of their potential knowledge, particularly linguistic knowledge. By not enabling second and third generation immigrants to maintain their HLs, the government has been effectively denying them entry into rewarding posts in the public service. What is more, if second and third generation Canadians are being shut out of these jobs, then so are all Canadians who have not been given the opportunity to learn another language. Lack of access to language learning opportunities and ineffective language programs with inadequate support (not enough teaching hours, no materials or teachers) has locked and will continue to lock all Canadians out of these opportunities, while creating an elite class who have been able to acquire a second or third language, thereby betraying one of the most critical principles of the Multiculturalism Act "to promote the full and equitable participation of individual… in shaping all aspects of Canadian society" (CMA, 1988: 3.1.c).

6 Summary

No country has escaped the massive social changes in equality and human rights during the past decades but their effect has been by no means uniform. It was decision by the Canadian government to strongly champion these liberal ideals which has given rise to the proud and inclusive Canada of today. The federal government wields tremendous power. Not only does it control the largest share of the public purse but it also bears the knowledge that its laws and policies, its endorsement or lack thereof will be accepted by the

majority of Canadians. For the most part, the country puts faith in the government evaluation and judgment of the facts, even if they are, at the outset, extremely controversial. Historically litigious issues such as French as an official language, open immigration, and multiculturalism have all become accepted and valued characteristics of Canadian society.

The federal government's power to transform public opinion, however, has not been employed to legitimize heritage language status or use. The government has been reluctant to recognize the role of language in multiculturalism, to provide effective support to language maintenance (funds, knowledge, connections, training, national networks or even space in Canadian Heritage's mandate) or to even acknowledge the value of language learning. This has thus had very serious consequences for HL learning; as well as the support of official language bilingualism.

It has been three decades since the federal government took on multiculturalism as a policy. Official multiculturalism seems to have helped Canadians to feel more "comfortable regardless of their ethnocultural characteristics", but visible minorities are still reporting discrimination or unfair treatment "because of their ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion" (Statistics Canada, 2003: 26). What is more, the rates of language loss have not slowed. The government admits that once it "responded largely to the *needs* of specific groups *enabling* them to preserve and celebrate their identities" but has since shifted its focus to "assisting marginalized groups to build their capacity to better influence the social, cultural and economic and political institutions" (Canadian Heritage, 2000: 4).

This paper has exposed how the federal government has continued to take credit for "enabling" ethno-cultural groups in maintaining their cultural identity while failing to take partial responsibility for disabling the means for identity maintenance and the ideals of Multiculturalism. The federal multiculturalism policies and legislation may have been well-intentioned. In the beginning, the initiatives were substantial. However, the shifting interpretation of the multiculturalism and the nebulous nature of the actual Act itself have only obscured the significance of language in terms of implementing multiculturalism. The federal Multiculturalism Act *did* make reference to language and included the acquisition and maintenance of languages as one of its policy objectives. However, without explicit policy direction and definition of government responsibilities, the federal government has been easily able reinterpret and ignore language as part of the policy altogether and allow its financial support for the heritage language programs to be eliminated. Moreover, without a clear mandate of the powers, duties and functions of federal institutions with respect to the HLs of Canada, the implementation of Act has been made nearly impossible. The Multiculturalism Policy and Act, though perhaps well-intentioned, has supported the walls that it was supposed to break down.

Given the enormous social, economic and cultural changes that have since taken place, the federal policies on multiculturalism in its current form is not relevant to the present time, in philosophy, structure, or programs (Alberta,

1981). What is needed now is for the country to demand that the vision of multiculturalism move beyond arts, music, and "tolerance" to more closely reflect the needs and aspirations of our time, making language an essential part of our multiculturalism policies and programs – in talk and action in order to facilitate the acquisition, retention and use of languages in Canada, sustaining multilingualism and multiculturalism.

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Anjali Lowe
anjalilowe@mcmaster.ca