Toward a policy of heterogeneity in Canada:
The journeys of integration of multilingual student teachers of FSL in Ontario in plurilingual times

Julie Byrd Clark

jbyrdcla@uwo.ca

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Abstract

This article details the critical need for a policy of heterogeneity in Canada. Canada is changing, with a growing number of youth with multiple, overlapping and complex identities and linguistic repertoires. From this end, I argue that we can no longer look at language, identity,or community as separate, static or fixed categories and in this vein, we need official and public policies that support linguistic diversity and value heterogeneity. Drawing upon my ethnographic and sociolinguistic research which investigates multilingual youth training to become teachers of French as a Second Language (FSL) in Ontario, I demonstrate the importance of sociocultural research as regards multilingualism for language planning and policy, particularly when it comes to creating policies that reflect people's use of language(s) rather than simply seeing people as language users. In my fieldwork, I have found that the impact of multilingual practices tend to blur traditional boundaries related to languages, identities, cultures and education. This article contributes to language policy and planning as it aims to put forth new ways of conceptualizing multilingualism in relation to the development of theory, policies and professional practice in the fields of language education, teaching and public policy.

Key words: multilingualism, a policy of heterogeneity, language use, multiple identities, social categorization, investment, student teachers of French

Résumé

Cet article décrit le besoin critique d'une politique d'hétérogénéité dans un Canada changeant, surtout avec le grand nombre de jeunes aux identités multiples et imbriquées et aux répertoires linguistiques complexes. Conséquemment, on ne peut plus considérer la langue, l'identité, ou la communauté comme des catégories séparées ou bien fixées. Nous avons donc besoin de politiques officielles et publiques qui soutiennent et reflètent cette diversité linguistique tout en valorisant cette hétérogénéité. Sur la base de nos recherches sur les jeunes plurilingues qui suivent un

programme de formation de maîtres pour devenir professeurs de FLS (français langue seconde) en Ontario, nous démontrons l'importance des approches socioculturelles en ce qui concerne le plurilinguisme pour les domaines de la politique et l'aménagement des langues. en particulier pour la création de politiques qui reflètent les pratiques linguistiques des individus au lieu de les voir uniquement comme locuteurs de langues. Sur le terrain, nous avons trouvé que l'impact des pratiques plurilingues des gens tend à rendre floues les frontières traditionnelles entre les langues, les identités, les cultures, et l'éducation. Ce travail apporte une contribution à la politique et l'aménagement linguistiques en nous amenant à repenser nos conceptualisations du plurilinguisme, et au développement de la théorie, de la politique et de la pédagogie de l'enseignement et la didactique des langues et des politiques publiques.

Mots-clés : multilingualisme, politique d'hétérogénéité, pratiques langagières, identités multiple, categorisation sociale, investissement, enseignants-apprenants de la didactique du français

Introduction

What happens when you have youth with multiple, complex, heterogeneous identities who problematize linguistic and cultural boundaries in the classroom, and language teachers with no familiarity on how to value or include heterogeneity in their pedagogy, especially when many teachers have been trained to uphold standards, including a standard language, and to teach language as a set of separate, segmented skills?

In this article, I have two main objectives. First, I will discuss my interdisciplinary, ethnographic research,[1] which focuses on multilingual teacher candidates of French as a Second Language (FSL) and demonstrate its important links to language planning and policy and public policy. Second, I will explore the implications of this particular kind of research as regards future directions for language policy and planning and public policy.

The significance of legitimizing worldly, bilingual Canadian citizens

Canada is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse countries in the world with immigration accounting for two thirds of the population growth. Despite immigration, increased mobility and the emergence of trans-global identities, official educational policies and curriculum have not expanded to include the explicit development of multilingual repertoires or societal multilingualism in classrooms.

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[1]My sincere thanks to Dr. Sylvie Lamoureux, for welcoming me into a newly formed policy group at OLBI, and for being an inspiration to me.

These federal initiatives, such as *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality* (Government of Canada, 2008), are often directed at language teachers to contribute to producing effective human capital[2] (Byram, 2010); in other words, well-developed citizens of the world in this new knowledge economy. However, official language policies in Canada continue to function on a nationalist ideology of language and identity (one language, one people). As such, many FSL university and teacher education programs struggle with the tensions between finding ways to promote diversity and having to operate under an ideological competence-skills based model of language (Chomsky, 1965). This model views language learning as the mastery of "unitary, determinate practices that people can be trained in" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 44), rather than viewing linguistic repertoires as plural and multidimensional, shifting in different social contexts and interactions.

By recognizing the social realities of today's youth and by supporting the development of their linguistic repertoires, society would not only profit economically, but would also facilitate better integration and develop a more inclusive, pluralist democracy. Many studies have looked at how language teachers' work has been changed by increases in the number of multilingual students from diverse backgrounds (cf. Cenoz and Genesee, 1998; Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift, 2006; Dagenais, 2008; Mady and Turnbull, 2010). However, there is little research regarding the increasing numbers of multilingual teachers from diverse social backgrounds, and especially on those who have invested in being and becoming teachers of French (Byrd Clark, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010).

Une ethnographie à géométrie variable*: An interdisciplinary approach*

What is the meaning of multilingualism and multiculturalism for young people in today's globalized world? This was one of the main questions that guided my two-year ethnographic research on Italian Canadian youth from diverse linguistic, social and geographical backgrounds in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), who engaged in the study of French beyond high school and desired to become teachers of French. I wanted to understand in particular, not only how and why the youth invested in the acquisition of French as co-official language, but additionally, in what ways their investments impacted their ways of thinking about languages and identities (including citizenship). *Investment* is not a new term in sociolinguistics (Bourdieu, 1982; Norton

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[2]Human capital does not only have to do with the development of knowledge and skills for training highly skilled, adaptable workers for economic profit or the demands of the labour market, but it has to do with an investment in education which offer social benefits in order to increase civic participation and more equitable conditions.

Pierce, 1995; Byrd Clark, 2008a, 2009, 2010), nor is social identity construction. Yet, the application of these concepts is still emerging in the fields of applied linguistics, second language education and French language pedagogy (FSL teacher education). The term investment is used instead of motivation to capture more of the social and affective dimensions, the complexity and the varied degrees of how and why people engage with the study of languages and invest in certain representations of knowledge over others (see Byrd Clark, 2008a, 2009, 2010; Byrd Clark and Labrie, 2010). In reconceptualizing Norton's (2000) notion of investment, I have built upon this term to include a symbolic and reflexive component. My conceptualization of a symbolic investment with a reflexive component permits the teacher (as well as the researcher and learner) to become reflexive of their (own) investments in representations of languages, identities and knowledge (e.g. competence, effective or appropriate teaching skills). It can help reveal the ways in which social processes, such as social categorization, operate through our linguistic practices and in the ways in which we come to value and invest in the meanings of such categories.

My analysis for the two-year ethnographic study specifically focused on how nine Core participants (chosen from a larger sample of 25 participants) conceptualize and talk about their own linguistic practices, experiences and self-identifications in relation to how they are seen by others in different contexts (diverse educational sites, at home with family members, at peer networking sites, etc.).

Similar to the conceptualization of variable geometry, which looks at different sets of numbers, my multidimensional approach looks and positions different sets of participants from multiple angles around different overlapping themes and sub-themes, and in so doing, attempts to coherently locate the essence of post-structural, fluid, multi-voiced and shifting positions. Using this creative strategy permits us to see the overlapping of macro and micro, contradictory discourses (operating at both the institutional and local, everyday levels), negotiated identities and symbolic investments[3] while combining three methodological approaches (critical sociolinguistic ethnography, reflexivity and discourse analysis) in dialectics with an interdisciplinary theoretical framework (see Byrd Clark, 2009).

The focus on the investments of multilingual Canadian youth became very important; that is, how and why they were engaged in the study of French, in particular. Through these multi-layered engagements, I was able to observe how social processes (such as social categorization) work, as well as how and

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[3]The word "symbolic" is used in front of "investment" to indicate a reflexive component in relation to the complexity of meaningful purposes that an investment holds or represents.

why individuals invest in certain ideologies, representations and discourses of languages and identities. More importantly, I could see the multidimensional and complex significance that multilingualism, particularly the acquisition of French, held for youth of immigrant backgrounds (in this case, Italian). The youth invested in French as linguistic (and symbolic) capital and as a strategy to integrate both their social and professional worlds. For example, at certain times I witnessed how these investments had an impact on the participants' egoic attachments to things (e.g. ideas) as well as on their conceptions of self-esteem, legitimacy and value. This demonstrates the significance of ethnographic sociocultural research, as the social has an impact on the cognitive and affective realms (socialization having an impact on the ways in which we come to see and represent ourselves as well as how we feel about our linguistic practices).

Some researchers have used the term *allophones* to describe students of immigrant backgrounds whose home language is neither English nor French (e.g. Mady, 2007, 2010). I find this term problematic as the label still implies a Chomskyian conception of language[4] as the competence or innate knowledge of the monolingual speaker-hearer in a homogeneous speech community, and prescribes an L1 (as complete linguistic competence) and L2 (as incomplete linguistic competence) as separate entities (in this case, an L1, L2 and L3). A Chomskyian conception continues to reproduce models of seeing language learners as "essentialized interlocutors with essentialized identities, who speak essentialized language" (Block, 2003, p. 4). Thus, the term *allophone* creates a homogeneous category or single identity marked by difference. The use of such a term is problematic as Canadians who do not speak English or French as a first language are lumped together and reduced into one homogeneous group being defined as "other" than official.

While the participants in my study all claimed Italian as an ethnic identity, how they claimed their identities, linguistic competence(s) and self-representations varied greatly. For example, some of the participants struggled between the contradictory nature of being Italian and Canadian at the same time, others claimed to be half or part Italian, some claimed to be Francophone above any other identity, and a few did not know how to self-identify due to the conflicting messages and expectations they received from parents of mixed marriages and society about *who* they ought to be and become. However, these identities

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[4]This conceptualization of language actually harks back to Plato and his view of language as an ideal form. In this case, Chomsky looked at language as something innate that had already been pre-programmed in our brains. His conception of language reflects a universal object and system that can be mastered with our minds. His view did not consider any social impact on language learning, nor the plurality that exists between languages.

shifted depending on the context and with whom the participants were speaking. From the Core group, I also had diversity in the scholarly experiences of the participants as they came from different French language education programs: two from French Immersion, two from Francophone schools and five from Core French programs. This was also an important feature to my study, as many studies tend to research Anglophones and Francophones as separate groups in education (e.g. Swain and Lapkin, 1995; Heller, 1990, 1999; Heller and Martin-Jones, 2001; Gérin-Lajoie, 2010). You do not hear of too many studies on "Franglophones" or even this term, for that matter. More importantly, we do not see many studies that intertwine or bring together FSL and French as a First language education, particularly as regards diversity and plurality.

Interestingly, all of the participants experienced varied degrees of linguistic discrimination, whether they were made to feel that their French was not "good enough" or they did not possess a legitimate variety of French "le bon français" or have the "perfect accent". Nevertheless, because French represented multiple meanings (purposes) for them, sometimes simultaneously (e.g. a way to integrate socially in Canada and acquire upward social and economic mobility, a way to still teach something relatively close to Italian, a way to be recognized, valued, seen as worldly, cultured, sophisticated, a way to have some ownership over claiming a Canadian identity and have equal footing with other Canadians, a way to claim one's linguistic rights) they persisted with their studies in French and many of them became teachers of French.

It was equally interesting to hear what the participants had to say about their linguistic varieties and practices, how and what they valued as a legitimate Canadian, Italian and multilingual, and how they managed and negotiated their multiple identities (as well as challenged the ways in which others attempted to label them). Overall, my two-year research (Byrd Clark, 2008a, 2008b) study provides a better understanding of the social construction of identities in relation to language ideologies, the development of linguistic repertoires and the social mobility of youth from immigrant backgrounds in an urban milieu marked by globalization. Using a sociolinguistic ethnographic approach creates opportunities to move beyond an essentialist view of identities and languages as static, unitary and fixed, shifting toward a more post-structuralist and interdisciplinary understanding of identities and languages as fluid, multiple and a site of struggle, constructed in linguistic interaction (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Cameron, 2000; Labrie, 2002; Byrd Clark, 2007, 2008a, 2009; Byrd Clark and Labrie, 2010).

Why is this important? As educators and policymakers, we do not have a group of homogeneous learners (or citizens) sitting in front of us; we have individuals with multi-layered social and historical trajectories with particular life

experiences, who draw upon these histories in each interaction. Sociocultural research can create spaces for us to become reflexive of our own investments and of our own identifications as well as others' interpretations of us in different spaces. We can become more aware of how and why we think, speak (use language), and act in the ways that we do in particular settings with particular people. This cannot only lead to an understanding of how complex social processes and relations operate, demonstrating that languages and identities cannot be categorized into neat, separate compartments with clear boundaries in the brain (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Block 2003), but can lead us to think differently about language, to a reconceptualization of multilingualism where we can find some wiggle room (see Erickson, 2001) or middle ground between institutional structures and everyday linguistic practices; where heterogeneity is valued.

Nevertheless, official language policies in Canada continue to reproduce solutions based on the language-nation-state ideology (Hobsbawm, 1990; Lamarre, 2010) reminiscent of the 1960s and 70s (e.g. one language, one people). By implementing these policies, the Canadian government is trying to balance maintaining individual rights (universalistic), and at the same time setting up a pluralist framework to give recognition to both multicultural groups and English and French minority communities (particularistic), thus recognizing the specificity of the cultural and linguistic community to which individuals belong. However, the notion of community is becoming blurred. Recognizing difference can become problematic because an individual may belong to several cultural and linguistic communities (Quell, 2000) and more importantly, not all groups (or languages, for that matter) are perfectly homogeneous (Marcellesi, 1979; Rampton, 2006). This imagining and framing of the Canadian nation-state has facilitated the perpetuation of several different ideological conceptualizations about languages; three that have preoccupied FSL education have had to do with standardization, bilingualism and competence. Reflecting upon the idealized form of language, we see that bi/multilingualism is actually conceived as the mastery of two (or three) separate monolingualisms. Heller (1999, p. 5) states, "What is valued is a mastery of a standard language, shared across boundaries, and a marker of social status". Setting up bilingualism as two separate monolingualisms, where each variety conforms to certain prescriptive norms places some students at an advantage over others in terms of their ease of access of learning to be bilingual that way (p. 271).

Through the institution of school, we can observe how some of these representations and discourses upholding a standard language appear to be normalized and presented in a neutral, universal, and democratic fashion. For example, multilingualism is still being viewed as the mastery of three separate systems of a monolingual multilingualism (e.g. Gumperz, 1982; Castellotti,

2008) or a pluralization of monolingualism (see Pennycook, 2010). This formalist approach and language-nation-state ideology likewise demand the management of actual internal heterogeneity (dealing with perceived incursions of one language into another as well as repressing practices like code-switching and language switching), as everyday linguistic practices are not often accorded any legitimacy in school classrooms (see Bourdieu, 1977, 1982; Heller, 1999; Byrd Clark, 2007, 2008a, 2008b).

With an emphasis on achieving ideal native speaker competence and performance, many studies in FSL have been focused on researching effective communicative practices for FSL teacher education in relation to developing curriculum as well as varied conceptualizations of competency, proficiency, and accuracy (Stern, 1983; LeBlanc, 1991; Turnbull, 2001; Lapkin et al., 2006; Bayliss and Vignola, 2007). Other more recent research (Newby et al., 2007; Hebert, Guo and Pellerin, 2008; Eaton, 2010) has centred on aligning FSL teachers and learners with recent frameworks in Europe, such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the European Profile of Language Teacher Education (ELP). Nevertheless, these studies have not taken into account the complex investments of teachers and learners in relation to their social identity construction, their heterogeneity, their multiple trajectories or the social and political dimensions of these new directions (Kelly and Grenfell, 2004; Pennycook, 2010). Also, reflexivity in these studies tends to focus on the development of metalinguistic awareness and/or recognizing of stereotypes, but not necessarily on critical awareness of one's own investments in and ways of engaging with different representations, ideologies or discourses of languages and identities (Byrd Clark, 2008b, 2009, 2010). While many studies have attempted to measure students' motivation and language proficiency and have focused on increasing achievement and retention in FSL (e.g. Lapkin, Swain and Shapson, 1990; Bayliss, 2000; Karsenti, Raby and Villeneuve, 2008), few have considered what learning and teaching French means to students; that is, how and why they engage in the study of languages as well as what they do with language(s). Often quantitative measures are used to measure proficiency and achievement, but we do not hear the students' voices in these studies.

Nonetheless, contemplating Heller's work (1994, 1999, 2001, 2007) on bilingualism, we need to be mindful that schools are not exclusively sites of social reproduction. It is possible for social transformation to take place in schools (e.g. Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard and Lintz, 1996), between individuals, who interact with their inventive resourcefulness (Goffman, 1967) and local linguistic practices (Pennycook, 2010). Structures constrain but do not determine agency or strategies. However, in order for bi/multilingual education to have more opportunities and fewer constraints, we need to reconceptualize

multilingualism by constructing policies and pedagogy that value heterogeneity and question the ways in which realities are constructed as well as how they get prioritized. In other words, we need to reflect people's use of language, rather than simply seeing people as language users. At the same time, we need reflexive pedagogical approaches that help us to go beyond measuring competence based on singular performances of categorized skills. We need to be aware of individuals' particular life experiences, their social and political realities of what it means to be and become pluri- or multilingual French language teachers. As educators and researchers, we also need to continually be reflexive and question our own and others' assumptions about languages, cultures and identities.

What can an ethnographie à géométrie *offer language planning and policy?*

The study of individuals' discursive practices for an extended period of time in different contexts or multiple sites has much to offer language policy and planning and public policy. Complex linguistic repertoires and youth with multiple, hybrid identities are some of the ways that Canada is changing, and as such, pose an implicit challenge to both psycholinguistic Second Language Acquisition approaches to the study of languages as well as to Canadian political solutions, such as the language-nation-state-ideology (one language/one people) adopted from the 1960s and 1970s. This kind of data cannot be adequately captured with large surveys or census data. However, it can be captured through ethnographic work. It also allows for rich descriptions and multi-voiced stories, and has the capacity to produce working hypotheses to enable policy makers and educators to make informed decisions about the transferability to and significance of such findings for their own contexts. More importantly, the research I have presented here in this article provides one way for us to understand how and why (future) language teachers do the things that they do, how they see themselves, how they are seen by others in certain contexts and how certain representations become meaningful or symbolic (Moscovici, 1984; Kramsch, 2009). The creation of new policies means more than taking account of unequal power relationships, more than an oppressor/oppressed deficit model, it means creatively finding ways to support diversity and more opportunities for equal access to education. New policies on heterogeneity could support not only challenging, but engaging people to think differently about languages, identities and cultures with a deeper understanding of what it means to be and become multilingual and multicultural Canadian.

The conception of a nation-state ideology is no longer tenable in today's globalized world as it does not reflect the social realities of today's youth. Whether we look at language as a discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Labrie, 2002),

as a social construction (Heller, 2007; Lamarre, 2009), as a local practice (Pennycook, 2010), as a plurilingual and pluricultural competence (Coste, 2002; Kramsch et al., 2008; Moore and Gajo, 2009), as symbolic capital or competence (Bourdieu, 1982; Byrd Clark, 2008a; Kramsch, 2009) or as an investment (Norton, 2000; Byrd Clark, 2009), language is a social, dynamic activity in which people engage through their everyday lives.

To recapitulate then, an *ethnographie à géométrie variable* ('sociolinguistic reflexive ethnographic research') creates spaces for us to become reflexive of our linguistic practices, of our own ideological investments and of our own identifications as well as others' interpretations of us in different spaces, times and places. We can become more aware of how and why we think, speak, and act in the ways that we do in particular settings with particular people. This is important, as we can no longer look, categorize, or treat learners/citizens/individuals as homogeneous, static, sedentary, or unidimensional entities. We look much more at how individuals construct their humanity, their ways of being, doing and thinking through discourse (or their social and linguistic practices), and how these shift in contexts, interactions and moments. We need to think about the ways in which we have been labeled or categorized, and get in touch with our own ideological attachments and investments, so that we can take action and create new public policies, to imagine a social reality that offers more opportunities and less constraints. More importantly, with sociocultural research (insofar as what I have presented here), we can see how everyday life happens in the social world — for instance, how socialization has an impact on our own investments, how we come to think about things, how we internalize such things — in other words, we can see how daily life is achieved. This can not only lead to an understanding of how complex social processes and relations operate, demonstrating that languages and identities cannot be categorized into neat, separate compartments with delineated boundaries in the brain (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Block 2003), but can lead us to think differently about language, to a reconceptualization of multilingualism where heterogeneity is valued. We must look at the diversity of meanings rather than the diversity of languages (in terms of enumerating languages). Can we practice pedagogy and create public policies that treat diversity, human agency, heterogeneity and multimodality as the norm?

My hope is that this research will inspire new ways of engaging and rethinking such policies surrounding what it means to be and become multilingual.

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