

French in Free Fall

The Failure of Canadian and Quebec Language Policies

A brief

presented by

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to the

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1. The making of our current policies

Canada's linguistic makeup remained remarkably stable during the greater part of the federation's first century of existence. According to the earliest Canadian census, in 1871, the country's population was 62% of British ethnic origin, 29% French, and 8% of Other origins (Lachapelle & Henripin 1982). Eighty years later, the 1951 census found the mother-tongue composition of Canada's population to be still 59% English, 29% French, and 12% Other languages. Up until then, a higher French-Canadian birth rate had counterbalanced British immigration and the assimilation of some Francophones and most Allophones to English.¹ But the modernization of French-Canadian society following the Second World War caused its birth rate to plummet. The 1961 census showed that the Francophone share of the population had begun to drop appreciably, including in Quebec, and that Anglicization was increasing apace among the Francophone minorities in the rest of Canada. Heated debate ensued over how to ensure a future for French, even leading some to advocate independence for Quebec.

In response to growing support for this position, Ottawa mandated a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) to enquire as to how the country could be developed "on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races". By comparing the 1961 census data on mother tongue with that on ethnic origin, the

¹ *Anglophone*, *Francophone*, and *Allophone* designate a person of English, French, or Other mother tongue.

Commission established that even in Quebec, English was out-drawing French as language of assimilation, both in terms of language shift between English and French, and in terms of its superior power of attraction among Allophones – with the notable exception of those of Italian descent. The superior power of assimilation of English was especially evident in the Montreal area.

An unbalanced dynamic such as this called for strengthening the status of French everywhere in Canada, Quebec included. The Commission rather recommended, for the federal level, a balanced policy based on the principle of personality, with English and French as coequal official languages (RCBB 1967). In particular, all federal services were to be made available in both French and English from coast to coast, and federal civil servants throughout Canada were to be given the right to work in the official language of their choice.

As concerns other levels of government, the RCBB notably recommended that Quebec, New Brunswick, and Ontario should all become officially bilingual too; that parents anywhere in Canada should enjoy the right to have their children educated in the official language of their choice; and that bilingual districts should be proclaimed wherever an official-language minority accounted for 10% or more of the population, with the aim of guaranteeing therein public services of all orders in English in Quebec and in French in the rest of Canada. Bilingual districts, the Commission emphasized, constituted the “cornerstone” of its proposed policy.

Such a policy was disconnected from reality in Quebec. Adequate public services in English of all kinds, including schooling and higher education, had always been available throughout the province. And French was under especial pressure in the Montreal

area, where even Italophone parents were now clamouring for the right to have their children schooled in English. The facts pleaded, therefore, against an officially bilingual Quebec, as well as against the establishment of bilingual districts to further strengthen the status of English in Montreal, or in any other area of the province where English already dominated French.

The RCBB had nonetheless balked at the idea of an essentially French Quebec, or even of a more French Quebec. In particular, it had explicitly rejected a federal policy based on the principle of territoriality, similar to those in use in Belgium or Switzerland, for the distinct reason that “in North America today the population is so mobile that it would seem unrealistic to adopt a rigid principle of this type, *even if it were deemed desirable*” (RCBB 1967, p.84; our underlining). The Commission had instead opted for what can properly be termed a policy of linguistic free-trade, i.e., for the free circulation of individuals, over and above any linguistic measures which might possibly hinder such mobility, however “desirable” they might appear – including such measures as might be deemed essential for the protection of Quebec’s French character.

In reaction, in late 1968 Quebec struck its own Commission of Inquiry on the Situation of French and Language Rights in Quebec (CSFQ), more widely known as the Gendron Commission. However, the Canadian government would not wait any further. It quickly adopted in 1969 its *Official Languages Act*, which contained many of the RCBB’s recommendations, including bilingual districts.

A first Bilingual Districts Advisory Board (BDAB) raised a general row in Quebec by proposing that the entire province be declared a bilingual district. Francophones were further indisposed in 1971 by Ottawa’s *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, which sounded the

death knell of the binational, “two founding races” view of a country based on a coequal pact between a French Canada and an English Canada.

The Gendron Commission found, in the meantime, ample grounds to recommend that French be made Quebec’s official language, the language of work in the province, and the default language of general public communication between all Quebecers (CSFQ 1972). The reason the Commission considered the latter – its over-arching recommendation – to be required is noteworthy: “There will always be a great number of unilingual Francophones in Quebec [...] Such persons should be able to circulate in every part of Quebec’s territory while using the only language they know, namely, French [...] Such is not the case at present, most especially in the Montreal area, where the great majority of Anglophones and Allophones are concentrated”² (our translation).

It is striking that the RCBB had rejected a policy based on the principle of territoriality so as to facilitate the free circulation of individuals throughout Canada, while the CSFQ, to the contrary, had rejected the RCBB’s recommended policy for Quebec – a policy of bilingualism based on the principle of personality – in order to ensure the free circulation of Francophones throughout the province. Thus, while the free circulation of individuals throughout Canada appeared essential to the RCBB, the free circulation of Francophones within Quebec was paramount from the Gendron Commission’s point of view.

² « *Il y aura toujours au Québec une masse unilingue francophone [...] Ces personnes devraient pouvoir circuler sur toute partie du territoire du Québec en se servant de la seule langue qu’ils connaissent, le français [...] Tel n’est pas le cas actuellement, tout spécialement dans la région montréalaise où sont regroupés la grande majorité des anglophones et des membres du tiers groupe* » (CSFQ 1972, p.153).

The RCBB had suggested that in addition to the usual questions on mother tongue and on the ability to converse in English or French, the census should include a new question on language currently spoken most often at home. Main home language was consequently asked for the first time in the 1971 census. Released in the summer of 1973, the results clearly confirmed the superior power of assimilation of English in Quebec, and most notably in the Montreal area, which could now be gauged in a more up-to-date and precise fashion by comparing the 1971 data on current main home language with that on mother tongue.³

Quebec finally moved in 1974. Its *Official Language Act* declared French to be the official language of Quebec, and attempted to make French the language of schooling for all children who were not fluent in English, as well as the language of work in Montreal.

The table was set for conflict between Ottawa's free-trade, official-language-of-your-choice approach and Quebec's protectionist, one-official-and-common language bent. A second BDAB tried to mend things somewhat, by proposing that no bilingual district be created in the Montreal area (BDAB 1975). The Board refrained, however, from backing up its report with the new information on current assimilation, and based its Montreal recommendation on mere opinion. Ottawa immediately threw the

³ For the first time in census history, the comparison of the 1971 data on main home language data with that on mother tongue provided information on *current* assimilation, that is, on assimilation which had been carried out by respondents during their lifetime. In contrast, the RCBB had been obliged to estimate assimilation by comparing the 1961 data on mother tongue with that on ethnic origin. The Commission was fully aware that its resulting observations on what might be called *ancestral* assimilation were largely outdated, i.e., at best "a generation behind the facts" (RCBB 1967, p.18). Whence its suggestion to add a census question on current main home language.

recommendation out and vowed to create a maximal number of bilingual districts in Quebec, including in Montreal (Hansard 1975, pp.9327-9328).

Quebec reiterated its opposition to bilingual districts on its territory. Discontent was also rife across all language groups in the province over the language test being used to regulate access to English schools. The whole contributed to the 1976 election of an independentist government. In March 1977, the new government announced its intention to implement the Gendron Commission's key recommendation, namely, to make French the greatest common denominator of Quebec society. The forthcoming legislation would notably aim at stabilizing the weight of Quebec's Francophone majority by reorienting the assimilation of future immigrants towards French instead of English (Laurin 1977, p.6). Tabled in April 1977, Quebec's *Charter of the French Language* was geared to do just that.

Ottawa reacted in June 1977 with its own policy statement, which simply acknowledged the existence of a "sense of insecurity" about the future of French in Canada, without supplying the slightest data in support of such anxiety (Castonguay 1979). It basically sought to discredit the language policy under discussion in Quebec, by equating it with the end of Canada as a political unit (Canada 1977, pp.41 and 68).

At the same time, a backlash was developing in the rest of Canada against certain bilingual districts under consideration outside Quebec. Their territorial nature, too, was fast becoming impossibly irritating in the eyes of a growing number of English-Canadians, and the cornerstone of the RCBB's recommended policy was quietly shelved.

Eventually adopted in August 1977, the *Charter of the French Language* confirmed French as Quebec's sole official language, allowed access to English schools only to children of parents who had previously been schooled in English in Quebec, limited public

signage to French only, introduced stringent measures to make French the language of work in companies with 100 employees or more, and so on.

For a couple of years, Quebec's Charter achieved some success. French was beginning to replace English as default language of public intercourse. A 1978 federal-provincial agreement also gave Quebec the authority to select its economic immigrants. Quebec promptly included prior knowledge of French among its selection criteria, giving an extra boost to its Francization policy.

But Canada's Supreme Court began clipping Quebec's wings as early as 1979. And Ottawa capitalized on Quebec's failed 1980 referendum on sovereignty to rapidly adopt in 1982, without the province's consent, a renewed Canadian constitution which gave its Supreme Court even broader means to curtail Quebec's design to be different, notably including the schooling provisions of its Charter. Ottawa furthermore revamped its *Official Languages Act* in 1988, formally committing itself, among other things, to enhance the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking minority and to support and assist its development. By the mid-90s, the courts had left precious little of Quebec's original Charter intact (Poirier 2016).

2. The overall situation of French in Canada

2.1 Language group trends

After close to a century of stability, French has lost its footing. As Table 1 shows, from 29.0% of the Canadian population in 1951, Francophones have rapidly fallen to 21.0% in 2016. In the meantime, Anglophones dropped only slightly, from 59.1% to 57.0%, while Allophones almost doubled from 11.8% to 22.0%.

Table 1. Population by mother tongue, Canada, 1951 to 2016
(*in millions*)

	Total Popula- tion	English		French		Other	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1951	14.0	8.3	59.1	4.1	29.0	1.7	11.8
1961	18.2	10.7	58.5	5.1	28.1	2.5	13.5
1971	21.6	13.0	60.1	5.8	26.9	2.8	13.0
1981	24.1	14.8	61.4	6.2	25.7	3.1	13.0
1991	27.0	16.3	60.4	6.6	24.3	4.1	15.3
2001	29.6	17.5	59.1	6.8	22.9	5.3	18.0
2011	33.1	19.1	57.8	7.2	21.7	6.8	20.6
2016	34.8	19.8	57.0	7.3	21.0	7.6	22.0

Note: The relatively infrequent reports of two or more mother tongues, as collected since 1981, have been apportioned equally among the languages reported. Earlier censuses did not allow reports of more than one mother tongue.

Table 1 also shows that the Francophone share of the population is declining quite steadily. In particular, since the 1969 *Official Languages Act*, Canada's Francophone component has dropped at the average rate of 1.3 percentage points per decade.

Anglophones have rather fluctuated in weight, while Allophones have rapidly increased in relative importance since 1981, due to Canada's recent policy of ever higher immigration.

Taken together, Canadian and Quebec language policies have neither stopped, nor even appreciably slowed, the free fall of the Francophone component of Canada's linguistic duality which had set into motion following the Second World War.

Table 2 shows that main home language has followed similar trends. Between 1971 and 2016, French home language dropped rapidly from 25.7% to 20.5%, while English just about held its own, at 67.0% and 65.9%, and Other main home languages almost doubled, from 7.3% to 13.6%.

Table 2 furthermore indicates that the French main home language component has fallen quite steadily, too, since Canada's initial *Official Languages Act*, at the average rate of 1.2 percentage points per decade. Similarly, again, to the remaining mother tongue trends established above, English home language has only fluctuated somewhat in weight, while Other home languages have increased rapidly and regularly since 1981.

Table 2. Population by main home language, Canada, 1971 to 2016
(*in millions*)

	Total Popula- tion	English		French		Other	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1971	21.6	14.4	67.0	5.5	25.7	1.6	7.3
1981	24.1	16.4	68.0	5.9	24.6	1.8	7.4
1991	27.0	18.4	68.3	6.3	23.3	2.3	8.4
2001	29.6	20.0	67.5	6.5	22.0	3.1	10.4
2011	33.1	22.0	66.3	7.0	21.0	4.2	12.6
2016	34.8	22.9	65.9	7.1	20.5	4.7	13.6

Note: The relatively infrequent reports of two or more main home languages, as collected since 1981, have been apportioned equally among the languages reported. Earlier censuses did not allow reports of more than one main home language.

It must be recalled that the RCBB considered that current main home language should replace mother tongue as basis for calculating the size of language groups in Canada: “We will use especially the question concerning mother tongue [rather than that concerning knowledge of the official languages], because it best determines the linguistic group to which the individual belongs [...] Wherever relevant, our recommendations have to be based on the statistics for mother tongue. If a question on the language generally used

is added to the census – and if the data gained from the responses to this question are considered valid – we think this should be used as a basis for future calculations” (RCBB 1967, p.18).

In this connexion, the comparison of Tables 1 and 2 shows that English weighs in distinctly higher – most recently almost 9 percentage points higher – as main home language than as mother tongue, while French is lower, and Other languages much lower still. The superior power of assimilation of English in Canada is the sole reason for this.

Indeed, along with high immigration and low Anglophone and Francophone birth rates, assimilation, that is, language shift in the intimacy of the home, is also strongly driving the trends established in both Table 1 and Table 2. For, on the one hand, such shift is not rare: at any given census, ten per cent of all Canadians claim to speak most often at home a language – usually English – other than their mother tongue. And, on the other hand, parents will normally transmit their main home language as mother tongue to their children, which just about entirely compensates for Anglophones’ inadequate birth rate, thus helping to maintain the weight of English in terms of mother tongue as well. The converse holds for French.

2.2 Monitoring language policies through language shift

Insofar as language behaviour at home reflects the status of languages in public life, census data on shift from French mother tongue to English as main home language, and from Other mother tongues to English or French, can serve to gauge and monitor the effectiveness of language policies in Canada. Shift also exists in the opposite directions – from English to French, for instance – but to a lesser degree. Consequently, to keep things

simple, we will only deal here with net shift. Net shift from French to English, for example, is calculated by subtracting the relatively infrequent cases of shift from English to French from the more frequent cases of shift from French to English.⁴

Table 3 shows that language shift in Canada was radically lopsided in 1971, and has remained so through 2016. English has continued to win hands down over French in net shift between the two languages, and hands down again in its vastly superior power of assimilation among Allophones.

⁴ Language shift can also be gradual and, occasionally, lead to reports of two or more languages as mother tongue or main home language. Once again, to keep things simple, for the purposes of the present study such multiple responses have been equally apportioned among the languages reported.

Table 3. Language shift, Canada, 1971-2016

	1971	1991	2011	2016
Net language shift				
French to English (1)	278,000	350,000	411,000	427,000
Anglicization rate of Francophones	4.8%	5.3%	5.7%	5.8%
Other to English (2)	1,201,000	1,779,000	2,427,000	2,660,000
Other to French (3)	31,000	76,000	203,000	245,000
French share of Allophone assimilation (3) / (2) + (3)	2.5%	4.1%	7.7%	8.4%
Overall outcome of assimilation				
Gain for English (1) + (2)	1,479,000	2,129,000	2,838,000	3,087,000
Loss for French (3) - (1)	- 247,000	- 274,000	- 209,000	- 182,000

True, the share of French in the assimilation of Allophones has progressed from a meager 2.5% in 1971 to a less meager 8.4% in 2016. But the net Anglicization of Francophones has also increased in absolute numbers, from 278,000 to 427,000, as well as in percentage of the total Francophone population, from 4.8% to 5.8%. The increase in the

number of Anglicized Francophones has, furthermore, a double impact on assimilation's overall outcome, i.e., on Table 3's two bottom lines: it increases by exactly as much both English's overall gain and French's overall loss. So that while English has doubled its overall gain via assimilation, from less than 1.5 million in 1971 to over 3 million in 2016, French remains, on the same score, almost as mired in deficit today as it was close to a half-century ago.

Overall, then, it appears that, taken together, Canadian and Quebec language policies, including improved opportunities for schooling in French outside Quebec, and the weakened schooling provisions of Quebec's Charter, have not fundamentally changed the prevailing dynamics of assimilation in Canada initially documented by the RCBB and the 1971 census.

3. French in Quebec

3.1 Language group trends

Due to high post-war immigration, followed by a decreasing birth rate, Francophones initially dropped from 82.5% of Quebec's total population in 1951 to 80.7% in 1971. They rose back to 82.8% in 1986, as a result of exceptionally high out-migration of Anglophones from Quebec to the rest of Canada, gradually dropped again to 81.4% in 2001, and finally, as Canada jacked up its annual immigration to record heights, fell at record pace to a record low of 78.0% in 2016. From the census of 1901 – the first to include a question on mother tongue – through the census of 2001, that is, for a full century, Quebec's Francophone majority had never dropped significantly below 80%.

Pursuing its historic inclination to “go West” for economic reasons, Quebec’s Anglophone minority first fell gradually from 13.8% in 1951 to 13.1% in 1971. It then plunged abruptly to 10.3% in 1986, as the Anglophone birth rate bottomed out at 1.46 children per woman and a negative reaction to an officially French Quebec drove Anglophone out-migration to a momentary frenzy. Anglophones subsequently dropped more slowly to 8.3% in 2001, and have remained practically stable since then, weighing in at 8.1% in 2016. A consequence of low Anglophone out-migration to the rest of Canada since 2001, of record high immigration to Quebec since 2003, and of the superior power of assimilation of English, the Anglophone minority’s recent stability, too, is an entirely new development, unseen before in Canadian census history.

Depending on immigration levels, Allophones increased more or less rapidly from census to census, rising from 3.7% of Quebec’s population in 1951 to 13.8% in 2016. They now far outweigh Anglophones.

As in the whole of Canada, main home language trends in Quebec generally run parallel to those for mother tongue. Thus, French home language initially rose from 80.8% in 1971 to 83.0% in 1991, declined very slightly until 2001, then plunged to 80.6% in 2016. Similarly, as for Other mother tongue, Other home language has risen steadily overall, from 4.5% to 8.6%. English home language is, however, a notable exception. After falling very sharply during 1971-1981, then more mildly until 2001, English home language rose regularly – unlike English mother tongue – from 10.5% in 2001 to 10.7% in 2016. Another significant historical first.

It must be recalled that the RCBB considered main home language to be a better indicator of belonging to a language group than mother tongue. From this standpoint,

language group trends since the turn of the 21st century definitely spell a bright future for Quebec's English-speaking population – to the detriment, however, of the province's French-speaking character.

3.2 Trends in assimilation

Assessing language shift trends in Quebec is a bit of a challenge. Changes made to the census questionnaire in 1991, and again in 2001, have artificially boosted French's performance on this count in the province. And favouring prior knowledge of French in the selection of Quebec's economic immigrants since 1978 further boosted reports of Allophone shift to French, over and beyond the genuine impact which Quebec's Charter has had on language behaviour in everyday life.

For instance, at first glance, Table 4 can lead one to believe that the Charter had already succeeded by 1991 in almost totally eliminating net shift from French to English and in boosting the share of French in Allophone and overall assimilation. In reality, net shift from French to English had previously been on the rise, from 24,500 in 1971 to 28,500 in 1981 and 39,500 in 1986, before dropping overnight, so to speak, to 6,100 in 1991. Similarly, French's share of Allophone assimilation was going nowhere – 27.4% in 1971, 24.4% in 1981, 25.9% in 1986 – before leaping to 35.8% in 1991. French's share of the overall gains made by English and French through assimilation had consequently become outright negative in 1981 and 1986, before bounding to a highly positive 32.8% in 1991. The new questionnaire introduced in 1991 is the culprit here. The 1991 census data on language shift in Quebec, as well as those collected in subsequent censuses, are simply not comparable to the data on assimilation gathered in earlier censuses.

Table 4. Language shift, Quebec, 1971-2016

	1971	1991	2011	2016
Net language shift				
French to English (1)	24,500	6,100	10,600	23,000
Anglicization rate of Francophones	0.5%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Other to English (2)	74,600	129,500	176,700	186,800
Other to French (3)	28,200	72,200	190,600	230,400
French share of Allophone assimilation (3) / (2) + (3)	27.4%	35.8%	51.9%	55.2%
Overall outcome of assimilation				
Gain for English (1) + (2)	99,100	135,600	187,300	209,800
Gain for French (3) - (1)	3,700	66,100	180,000	207,400
French share of overall gains via assimilation (3) - (1) / (2) + (3)	3.6%	32.8%	49.0%	49.7%

In contrast, the boost given to French's power of assimilation by the 2001 questionnaire changes can at least be circumscribed. They translated into an artificial hike of two percentage points in French's share of both Allophone and overall assimilation. In Table 4, the increases shown on both counts between 1991 and 2011, or between 1991 and 2016, should be interpreted accordingly.

The most recent data, for 2011 and 2016, were, fortunately, obtained using identical questionnaires. They indicate an appreciable increase in net shift from French to English. In terms of the overall outcome of assimilation for French, the negative impact of this increase almost completely wiped out the positive effect of the continuing rise in French's share of Allophone shift. Indeed, while French's share of the latter increased appreciably from 51.9% in 2011 to 55.2% in 2016, the share of French in overall gains made via assimilation in Quebec barely rose from 49.0% to 49.7%.

The ratio of Francophones to Anglophones in 2016 was roughly 10:1 in Quebec as a whole, but 5:1 in the Montreal Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), and 3:1 on Montreal Island, making the two latter geographical areas crucial testing grounds for shift between English and French. The net Anglicization rate of the Francophone majority increased in the entire province from 0.2% in 2011 to 0.4% in 2016, but during the same five years, it rose from 0.9 % to 1.1% in Montreal CMA, and from 2.3% to 2.8% on Montreal Island.⁵

The recent increase in the net Anglicization of Quebec's Francophones strongly suggests a rise in status of English as compared to that of French. The most telling sign of this is the rush on pre-university studies in English, which lie beyond the schooling

⁵ The raw Anglicization rate of the Island's younger Francophone adults has even reached 5.8% in 2016. See Castonguay 2021, pp.45-50 and 54-56, for a more complete analysis of the most recent trends in language shift in Quebec.

provisions of the *Charter of the French Language*. The portion of newly registered Francophone pre-university students in Quebec choosing to study in English junior colleges rose from 7% in 2006 to 12% in 2018. In all, 27% of newly registered pre-university students in Quebec attended English institutions by 2018. The corresponding figure was 49% on Montreal Island. A trend reminiscent of that observed in Quebec schools prior to the Charter, and a sure indicator of higher Anglicization to come.

As for French's share of Allophone assimilation, the major driving force has not been the schooling provisions of Quebec's Charter, nor those pertaining to language of work, but rather the growing presence of *Francotropes* among Quebec's Allophone population. Francotropes are Allophones whose mother tongue is either a Romance language (save Italian) or a language spoken in former French colonies or protectorates. Because of their linguistic or historical affinities with French, Francotropes – in Quebec, at least – are more prone to assimilate to French than to English. The preference accorded, since 1978, to prior knowledge of French in Quebec's selection of its economic immigrants has tended to favour Francotrope immigration.

Actually, the arrival of refugees fleeing the Vietnam war and Haiti's Duvalier dictatorships had already caused the Francotrope share to grow to 50% among the 1971-1975 cohort of Allophone immigrants, the last to arrive before Quebec's Charter. And subsequent censuses revealed that the share of French in the assimilation of Allophone immigrants had already risen accordingly, to 52% among the cohort in question. Thus, the Francotrope factor had caused assimilation among the most recently arrived Allophones to become more favourable to French, even before the advent of the Charter.

After Quebec began, in 1978, to select its economic immigrants, the Francotrope share of its Allophone newcomers rose slightly above 50% among the 1976-1980 and 1981-1985 cohorts. But French's share of Allophone assimilation surpassed 60% among both of these, an appreciable increase over the 52% attained among the preceding cohort. Cross-tabulation with age upon arrival indicated that the additional Francization among the two later cohorts was related to compulsory schooling in French for Allophone children who had immigrated to Quebec after the Charter at less than 15 years of age.

The same analysis showed no such additional increase, however, in the French share of assimilation among Allophones who had arrived at the age of 15 years or more – which is the case for more than three quarters of Quebec's immigrants. It appears, therefore, that though Quebec's 1974 and 1977 language laws were also intended to make French the language of work, whatever success they may have had in that respect was not sufficient to induce any significant increase, beyond that due to the Francotrope factor, in French's share of assimilation among the more recently arrived Allophone workers.

In total, since less than a quarter of Quebec's immigrants are young enough upon arrival to be durably influenced by the schooling provisions of the Charter, the primary explanation of French's enhanced power of assimilation among Allophones remains, by far, their growingly Francotrope makeup. Ever new cohorts of mainly Francotrope Allophones gradually swell the percentage of Francotropes among Quebec's immigrant and native-born Allophone populations alike, and French's share in their assimilation grows accordingly.

French's share in the assimilation of Canadian-born Allophones initially took the opposite tack, however, falling very rapidly from 30.9% in 1971 to 17.3% in 1986. For the

most part, this was no doubt a consequence of the rush on English schools prior to the Charter. Italophone parents had spear-headed this movement, and, strikingly, Italophone shift to English doubled from 14,000 in 1971 to 29,000 in 1986, while that to French faded from 14,200 to 13,400.

Nonetheless, by 1991 the share of French in the assimilation of Canadian-born Allophones began to rise, as the Francotrope share of native-born Allophone children gradually increased, and as the proportion of native-born Allophone children whose parents had immigrated to Quebec after the Charter also began to grow. But progress on this count has been extremely slow. Despite the boost given to shift to French by the changes made to the census questionnaire in 1991, and again in 2001, by 2016 French's share of assimilation among Canadian-born Allophones had only reached 29.9%, still slightly below its initial 1971 reading of 30.9%.

It must also be kept in mind that Quebec only selects some 60% of its immigrants. The rest – refugees, family reunification – remains under federal jurisdiction. Since 2001, 67% of Quebec's Allophone immigrants have been Francotropes. By 2016, Francotropes already constituted 53% of Quebec's total Allophone population, 58% of its immigrant Allophone population, and even 38% of its Canadian-born Allophone population. The progress of French's share of Allophone assimilation has in fact been slowing down since 2001, no doubt because the Francotrope component of the Allophone population is nearing its upper limit.

What is more, a Statistics Canada survey recently revealed that 62% of shift to French reported by Allophone immigrants had been completed *before* immigrating, i.e., before actually living in Quebec. The corresponding percentage was only 47% for shift to

English. In all likelihood, prior knowledge of French in Quebec's selection of its economic immigrants has more frequently given the nod to Allophones who had already adopted French as main home language abroad, before immigrating. Most definitely, then, the major part of French's progress in assimilating Allophones must be ascribed to Quebec's selection of immigrants, and not to the effect of its much-weakened Charter on language behaviour within Quebec society.

4. French outside Quebec

4.1 Overall language group trends

Between 1951 and 2016, Francophones' weight outside Quebec has been almost halved, falling from 7.3% to 3.8%. Since 1991, they have ceased to grow significantly in number, oscillating around one million.

French home language has followed suit, albeit at much lower levels. Between 1971 and 2016, or, roughly, since Canada's initial *Official languages Act*, its weight dropped from 4.3% to 2.3%. It fell in real numbers from 676,900 in 1971 to some 620,000 in 1996, and has remained thereabouts ever since. It must be recalled once again that the RCBB considered that home language should replace mother tongue as a basis for calculating the size and weight of Canada's various official-language populations.

4.2 Overall assimilation trends

Table 5 shows that on the whole, assimilation outside Quebec works totally in favour of English. It also establishes that net shift from French to English has been steadily increasing. This is so, too, in terms of proportion: the net Anglicization rate of

Francophones outside Quebec has grown at every census, rising overall from 27.4% in 1971 to 40.1% in 2016.

Table 5. Language shift, Canada minus Quebec, 1971-2016

	1971	1991	2011	2016
Net language shift				
French to English (1)	253,600	344,000	400,900	404,000
Anglicization rate of Francophones	27.4%	35.2%	39.8%	40.1%
Other to English (2)	1,126,100	1,649,800	2,250,000	2,473,400
Other to French (3)	3,200	4,200	12,100	14,300
French share of Allophone assimilation (3) / (2) + (3)	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%
Overall outcome of assimilation				
Gain for English (1) + (2)	1,379, 700	1,993,700	2,650,900	2,877,400
Loss for French (3) - (1)	- 250,400	- 339,800	- 388,800	- 389,700

On the other hand, despite the fact that the Francotrope component of the Allophone population outside Quebec has risen, by 2016, to over one million, Allophone shift to French has remained insignificant. It is worthy of note, furthermore, that among the 14,300 cases of net shift from Other languages to French in 2016, as shown in Table 5, only 592 were reported by Allophones born in Canada. English is thus, to all intents and purposes, the exclusive language of assimilation of Canadian-born Allophones outside Quebec. Moreover, the major part of the few cases of shift to French reported by Allophone immigrants outside Quebec, Francotropes included, was, in all likelihood, previously completed abroad, before immigrating, as we have already seen to be the case in Quebec.

4.3 Anglicization of Francophones on the rise just about everywhere

Home to nearly a quarter of all Francophones outside Quebec, New Brunswick was 63.3% Anglophone and 35.2% Francophone in 1961, and became officially bilingual in 1969. The Anglicization rate of Francophones remained, for a time, below 10% in the province, but it is now rising steadily there too, from 9.2% in 2001 to 10.9% in 2016. New Brunswick is, today, appreciably more Anglophone (64.8%) and less Francophone (31.9%) than in 1961. English home language increased even more notably, from 67.9% in 1971 to 69.5% in 2016, while French home language declined more notably still, from 31.4% to 28.6%.

Ontario harbours a good half of the Francophone population outside Quebec. The Anglicization rate of Francophones in the province has nonetheless increased regularly, from 27.4% in 1971 to 43.3 % in 2016. The latest reading of 46.8% among younger Franco-

Ontarian adults leaves no doubt as to what the future holds in store. French home language has fallen to 2.3% of the province's population.

Everywhere else outside Quebec, Francophones' Anglicization rate has risen since 1971 by from 10 to 20 percentage points, to over – and often well over – 50%. And French home language has fallen below 2%.

British Columbia is the sole exception to the rule. Though French home language accounts for less than 0.5% of the province's population, the Anglicization rate of Francophones in B.C. has decreased somewhat, from 70.5% in 1971 to 68.4% in 2016. This is simply the temporary effect, however, of a growing presence of Francophone newcomers from Quebec and abroad – as we shall now see.

4.4 Anglicization of Francophones newcomers from Quebec and abroad

High Anglicization and inadequate fertility spell a dramatic intergenerational deficit among the Francophone population outside Quebec; in 2016, the number of Francophone children aged 0-4 fell 40% short of that of Francophone adults aged 30-34.

A steady stream of Francophone newcomers can help keep numbers up. But once established in the rest of Canada, Francophones from Quebec shift to English to almost the same degree as Francophones born outside Quebec (Castonguay 2008). The contribution of Francophone immigrants from abroad, actively fostered by Ottawa since 2003, proves likewise ephemeral (*ibid.*).

British Columbia is a perfect example of this. B.C. is the only province with a sizable Francophone population which has recently been growing in weight. As pointed out in the previous section, it is also the only province outside Quebec where

Francophones' Anglicization rate has slightly decreased. Now, the 2001 census already showed that 51% of Francophones in B.C. were born in Quebec. Another 13% were born abroad. Only 10% were born in B.C. The remainder hailed from the other Canadian provinces.

Upon their arrival in B.C., Francophones from Quebec or abroad will, to be sure, immediately increase the weight of the province's Francophone minority and lower its Anglicization rate. But once these newcomers have had the time to acclimatize, the census data reveal quite another story. While the net Anglicization rate of mature adult Francophones born in B.C. was a breath-taking 89%, the corresponding rate was also extremely high, at 65%, among their counterparts born abroad, and higher still, at 71%, among those born in Quebec (*ibid.*, p.77).

As we pointed out in Section 2.1, most Anglicized Francophone parents transmit English as mother tongue to their children. We also know, furthermore, that in B.C., the net Anglicization rate of second-generation Francophones, that is, of Francophones born in Canada of immigrant Francophone parents, is just as high as the corresponding rate among Francophones born in Canada of native Francophone parents. In other words, by the second generation, no trace is left of the slightly greater resistance to Anglicization observed among first-generation, or immigrant, Francophones (*ibid.*, p. 79).

It must be stressed that B.C. is no exception in the above respects. Similar observations hold in each and every other province outside Quebec.

In the light of these facts, the RCBB's rejection of a territorial language policy for Canada, in favour of "a policy that maximizes effective freedom of choice of where one

lives [...] without encountering linguistic inconveniences” (RCBB 1970, p.54), has proven singularly unrealistic.

For the same reasons, the more recent policy of promoting Francophone – or, for that matter, Francotrope – immigration towards the rest of Canada, in order to bolster the flagging demography of the Francophone minorities outside Quebec, appears equally ill-advised. Aside from the Acadian part of New Brunswick and certain Ontario counties bordering on Quebec, provinces other than Quebec simply do not provide most Francophone or Francotrope newcomers with a linguistic environment in which to thrive in French.

4.5 Anglicization in Canada’s capital

The most damning evidence of the bankruptcy of federal language policy remains, however, the ever-increasing Anglicization of Francophones in Canada’s very capital. The City of Ottawa boasts by far the highest concentration of Francophones outside Quebec – 136,000 strong in 2016. Their net Anglicization rate has nonetheless doubled, from 16.7% in 1971 to 34.1% in 2016. It has topped 40% among the capital’s younger Francophone adults, a proven forerunner of higher Anglicization yet. Since Canada’s initial *Official Languages Act*, Francophones have dropped from 20.5% to 14.7% of the capital’s population, and French home language, from 17.2% to 10.3%.⁶

⁶ The data for 1971 pertain to the population living within the present limits of the City of Ottawa.

5. What future for French in Canada?

In framing its language policy, Canada was initially more set on countering Quebec nationalism than on effectively bolstering the country's French-speaking minority. Its failure in this latter respect is by now abundantly clear. If Canada's linguistic duality is truly a fundamental trait to be cherished, Ottawa must undergo a major change of heart.

As the Anglicization of the Francophone minorities continues to take its toll, Quebec now includes over 91% of all Canadians who actively speak French as main home language. But were things to stay as they are, the prospects of French appear uncertain in Quebec itself.

For there is no evidence of any significant success of what is left of Quebec's *Charter of the French Language* in reorienting language shift more favourably towards French, beyond that of what remains of its schooling provisions. As the Francotrope factor draws closer to having attained its full impact, and as the net Anglicization of Francophones gains momentum in Montreal, English's superiority over French as language of assimilation in Quebec is gradually becoming stabilized.

Though French's overall gain through assimilation in the province may well eventually equal, or somewhat surpass, that of English, 50% is in no way a break-even point. To maintain the present balance of power between Francophones and Anglophones in Quebec would require French's overall share of assimilation to be over 90%. Only then would assimilation compensate Francophone and Anglophone infertility to the same degree. And only then would Quebec's predominantly French character be ensured.

Bogged down around 50% of overall shift, French is obviously not on the way to achieving anything of such order.

Erosion of French's majority status is nowhere more evident than in Montreal CMA, where 90% of Quebec's Allophone immigrants alight. On Montreal Island, in particular, French home language plunged from 56.4% in 2001 to 53.1% in 2016, while English rose from 24.9% to 25.1%. Signs that English is winning out over French as the Island's greatest common denominator are legion. The Island's younger Francophone adults are now more frequently bilingual than their Anglophone counterparts. And most adult newcomers who cannot speak French upon arriving in Montreal never bother to learn it.

The sophism which equates territorial bilingualism with the end of Canada has done quite enough damage to the status of French in Quebec. If Ottawa is honestly intent on preserving Canada's linguistic duality, it must henceforth help rather than hinder Quebec in promoting French as the undisputed common language of public intercourse in the province.

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