CHAPTER TWO

FROM THE EARLIEST TRAVELLERS TO THE ALEC

1. Population Trends in Canada

At the end of the Seven Years War, in 1763, France's remaining colonies on the mainland of North America were ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Paris. Acadia had been ceded to Britain 50 years earlier by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, and in 1755, because of the imminence of war with France and the troubled question as to whether the Acadians would remain neutral in such a war, the majority of the Nova Scotia Acadians (about 6,500) were forcibly deported. Their settlements were destroyed and those not deported were driven into the wilderness. This deportation, known as the *Grand Dérangement* has been made famous through Longfellow's poem *Evangeline*.

By 1763, therefore, Canada, Acadia and the left bank of the Mississippi had all became English possessions and the only French possessions remaining were the tiny islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, off the coast of Newfoundland.The "Canadiens" were given eighteen months to leave the country if they so desired, and the administrators and some of the bourgeoisie returned to France, but the vast bulk of the population, some 70,000 souls, remained where they had come to feel at home: some 10,000 in Acadia, and about 60,000 in the territory that, a few months later was to become, by royal decree, the Province of Québec.

At this time the Anglophone population of the Northeast was very small, not more than a few thousand settlers scattered along the coastline of Newfoundland and settled here and there in Acadia amid the Micmac Indians and those of the French who had returned from the Grand Dérangement. The vast bulk of the English speaking population of North America — some 1,500,000 — was to be found in the thirteen more southerly colonies along the Atlantic seabord that in a few short years would demand and achieve their independence as the United States of America.

This vast Anglophone population to the south has not ceased to have its influence upon the French of the New World. One of the first results of the American War of Independence, for example, was that the United Empire Loyalists, those Americans who had supported Britain in the war, fled from the new republic north into Canada, where they founded such cities as Toronto and St.John, New Brunswick, and brought with them their strong Puritan and pro-

British sentiments, feelings that would lead them to be unsympathetic to the Catholic and Francophone population of Québec and Acadia.

By 1851, when the first Canadian census was taken, the Provinces of Upper (Ontario) and Lower (Québec) Canada had been formed into a single United Canada. By that time the Province of Québec, from being 100% Francophone in 1763, had dwindled to 75.2% Francophone, in spite of the fact that the Francophone population had risen from 60,000 in 1763 to 669,528 in 1851.

The new anglophone population of Québec was centred mostly in the cities and the Eastern Townships. In 1851, for example, the population of Québec City, which is today some 95% Francophone, was only 58.3% Francophone, and Montréal, today almost 70%, was only 45.1% Francophone. And the city of Sherbrooke, the "capital" of the Eastern Townships had a population that was only 16.3% Francophone, whereas today it is approximately 90% Francophone.

By the Act of Union in 1841 that created the United Canada with its two provinces, the addition of the 150,000 Anglophones of Lower Canada (Québec) to the 400,000 of Upper Canada (Ontario) was sufficient to place the 450,000 Francophones of Lower Canada in a minority position. With the coming of the Canadian Confederation in 1867 they would remain approximately 30% of the population until the 1960's. In the census of 1951 they formed 31.6% of the population, but large scale immigration had reduced this to 28.1% by 1961. The spectacular drop in the birth-rate in Québec aided this decline to 26.8% in 1971, and by 1975 it was down to 25.9%.

This decline has also been assisted by the sometimes assimilationist policies of the English speaking provinces. In 1890, for example, the Manitoba Schools Act did away with denominational education in the Province of Manitoba, thus denying all funding to the Francophone schools, which were all parish schools. This denial of funding took place in spite of the rights granted, to the Francophone population, to religious freedom and to education in their own language (Sections 93 and 133 of the BNA Act).

The immense cultural upheavals of the years since the Second World War are again changing the relationship between the two principal linguistic groups in Canada. The new roads and the availability of efficient air travel have led to a greater mobility of the population, and a realization that Canada is something more than one's own province. It has also led to the realization that whether one speaks French or English one should be able to expect government and other services in either of the two principal languages throughout the country.

The first government move in this direction was the Official Languages Act of 1975 which recognized Canada as a bilingual state and defined what the uses of the two national languages would be. All labelling of goods, throughout the country, for example, would henceforth be in both French and English.

The necessity of a bilingual Federal Civil Service was also recognized, and a good deal of retraining of civil servants was undertaken, not always with the best of results because of problems of motivation, abilities, needs, and so forth.

The outstanding success of the Montréal experiment of "immersing" Anglophone children in French speaking schools led to the spreading of immersion schooling to all ten provinces, aided by the recognition that the place for developing the bilinguals of tomorrow is in the school system. University students were also given Federal bursaries to "immerse" themselves, the Anglophones in Francophone universities, and vice versa. And just as there was a great push in the years after 1867 to complete the transcontinental railway, the years after 1967 have seen the push to complete the French-language radio and TV networks from coast to coast. The result of all these programmes and changes is the gradual emergence of a bilingual elite, at home in either of the official languages, aware of, and sensitive to the duality of culture and language that is a part of the basic fabric of the Canadian state.

2. **Two Centuries of Commentary on Canadian French**

The changing status of the French language in Canada from that of a quite standardized colonial speech to that of an exceptionally important regional form of the language with its own independent history has been recorded over the years by a most interesting passing parade of commentators, analysts and researchers.

One of the earliest of these commentators was a Belgian Jesuit by the name of Father Pierre-Philippe Potier (1708–1781) who came out to Canada in 1743 as a missionary among the Huron, whose language he learned on first arrival. He left many manuscript notes on the Huron language, and also turned his linguistic curiosity on the French of New France, leaving us his *Façons de parler proverbiales, triviales, figurées, etc., des Canadiens au XVIIIe siècle*, composed mostly before 1745, that is, soon after his arrival. The title is not from Potier, but was conceived by the editoral committee on the *Bulletin du Société du parler français* which published it serially between 1904 and 1906. In fact the manuscript contains in its early pages notes from Belgian usage, and notes from the voyage across the Atlantic as well as some 1,000 observations on the particularities of Canadian French under the Old Regime.

Potier notes such familiar terms as *bordée de neige* 'snow shower', *bleuet* 'blueberry', *carriole* 'sleigh for passengers', *poudrerie* 'fine drift of snow', and the common Amerindianisms *atoca*, *achigan*, *maskinongé*, *caribou*, *ouaouaron*, *manitou*, etc., as well as others that have not survived. He notes variations such as *neigeotter*, *neigosser* ‘to snow a little’, and the vitality of the suffix *-ée* as in *carriolée* ‘sleigh load’, *canotée* ‘canoe load’. He also notes pronunciations such as *fisquer* ‘fixer’, *licher* ‘lécher’ *icit* ‘ici’ that are still familiar two and a half centuries later.

Another early commentator is the soldier d’Aleyrac who came to Canada in 1754 and returned to France in 1760. He observed that the speech of the inhabitants was not a patois but “un français pareil au nôtre”. He noted the number of maritime expressions such as *amarrer*, *hâler*, and the use of *une poche* for ‘a sack’, as well as *la relevée* for ‘the afternoon’, the time of the ‘dog watch’ on board ship which changes the watch duties every twenty four hours.

A nineteenth century commentator is Jacques Viger, born in 1787 in Montreal, editor of the *Canadien* in Québec 1808–1809, and the first mayor of Montréal where he died in 1858. Some of his manuscript material was published under the title *Néologie canadienne* in the *Bulletin du Parler français au Canada* (*BPEC*) in 1909–1910, but a further edition doing proper justice to the text and including other versions of the author’s own recopyings is, as Marcel Juneau notes (1979:22–26), much to be desired.

Some thirty words already noted by Potier appear in Viger’s lists, such as *achigan*, *bleuet*, *bordée de neige*, *canotée*, *maskinongé*, *atoca*, *poudrerie*. He also provides information on pronunciation, such as reduction of final consonant clusters, *licher* for *lécher*, and pronunciation of aspirated h in such expressions as *en haut*. And he gives certain geographical indications: the word for ‘kettle’ is *canard* in Montréal but *bombe* in Québec City. Other familiar expressions are also noted, such as *il mouille* for SF *il pleut*, *espérer* for *attendre*, *butin* for *vêtements* and *décaniller* for *décamper*.

Other early nineteenth century writers include Maximilien Bibaud writing in the 1820’s and giving plant names and place names and other such information in his *Magasin du Bas-Canada*, and Thomas Maguire, who published in 1841 his *Manuel des difficultés les plus communes de la langue francaise ...suivi d’un recueil de locutions vicieuses*. This latter work established a new theme which was to gain ground in the rest of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the ‘correcting’ and standardizing of Canadian French, a movement which sometimes went to the excess of trying to replace perfectly respectable Canadian words, with a history going back to Old French and Gallo-Romance, with the latest neologisms from Paris.

In spite of his normative and proscriptive intentions, however, Maguire does recognize some genuine Canadian usage, such as *barrer une porte* ‘to lock a door’, *chante-pleur* or *chanteplur* ‘tap’, (pronounced [ʃaplyːr] and also spelled *champlure*), and the measurements *gallon*, *pinte*, *chopine*, etc. He also notes Canadian neologisms such as *sauvagesse* 'Indian woman' and anglicisms such as *steamboat*.

The proscriptive movement is continued in the volume of N.Carson, *Petit vocabulaire à l'usage des Canadiens français* (1880), and is also found in Oscar Dunn's *Glossaire franco-canadien et vocabulaire des locutions vicieuses usitées au Canada* of the same year. This latter is the first major work on Canadian French, however, which shows, although incomplete, some acquaintance with other lexical work. Its strengths and weaknesses have been outlined by Marcel Juneau in the *Avant-propos* to the reprinted edition of 1976.

Fourteen years later another remarkable document, the *Dictionnaire canadien - francais* of Sylva Clapin appeared. An intelligent and cultivated man, Clapin worked as a bookseller in Paris and in Boston, and also as a journalist both in Québec and the U.S. From 1902 to 1921 he was a translator in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Born in St.Hyacinthe, Québec, in 1853, he died in Ottawa in 1928.

His dictionary contains, as well as over 4,000 entries, an introduction with a treatise on Canadian pronunciations, which goes into considerable detail and gives many examples, but is fatally marred by the fact that he treats the differences as *spellings*, and regards them as deformations of modern Standard French, which of course they are not. If the phonological changes that have taken place in France in the last 200 years, such as the shift from [wɛ] to [wa] in words such as *moi* and *toi*, are not to be considered as deformations, why should the changes that have taken place in Canada be so considered? Why should change in Canada be deformation when change in France is not? And when one knows the facts, how could one consider the Canadian pronunciation, [wɛ] (which is still commonly heard rurally and colloquially) as a "deformation" of standard [wa], when [wɛ] is the original pronunciation, unchanged in Canada since the seventeenth century? The pronunciation [wa], in fact, came into SF as a result of the Revolution of 1789 when the common people of Paris, whose pronunciation it was, took over the government and thereby established their speech as the basis of a standard.

If Clapin's work is numerically much larger than Dunn's, the work of N.E.Dionne, another amateur dictionary maker, overshadows both. Published in 1909 (and reprinted in 1974) Dionne's *Le parler populaire des Canadiens français* ...contains some 15,000 items, including many that are not found elsewhere.

Dionne was a member of the Société du parler français au Canada which had been founded in 1902 largely due to the efforts of a young lawyer by the name of Adjutor Rivard who was to become its director and editor of the *Bulletin* (BPFC) which flourished from 1902 to 1918, and contains a mine of information on Canadian French. In the *Bulletin* for 1909 Rivard reviews Dionne's dictionary, tactfully pointing out its considerable weaknesses and applauding the author for the copiousness of his collection.

The *Glossaire du Parler français au Canada*, published in 1930 (and reprinted in 1968) was also the work of Rivard and a team made up from members of the *Société*. As the complete title of the work shows, its purpose was fourfold: (1) to list the regional vocabulary of Québec not found in school texts, (2) to define the meanings of these words, giving examples, (3) to give indication of where these words came from and (4) their pronunciation.

The *Glossaire* has been much praised; it is a precious source of information on the lexicon and indirectly on the pronunciation of Canadian French. It shows in a massive way the archaic and regional nature of much Canadian French vocabulary by indicating that so many words can be traced to Old French and to the regional dialects of France, especially to the French provinces of the North, North West, and West — a crescent that runs along the English Channel and the Atlantic coast of France.

The *Glossaire*, however, is still incomplete in many ways. It only contains words that are still in use, not older ones that have died out, and it restricts itself to the usage of Québec, taking no account, for example, of the Acadian French of the Atlantic Provinces of Canada. It also ignores all those Canadian words such as *caribou*, *carcajou*, *mocassin*, etc., that have become a part of Standard French. Other more technical weaknesses have been pointed out by Marcel Juneau (1977:34–36).

In 1954 there appeared a work entitled *Dictionnaire général de la langue française au Canada*, which went through further editions in 1971 and 1974. This work has been much criticized since it is essentially a compendium of other pre-existing dictionaries and is a mine of misinformation. Belisle gives as Canadianisms, for example, words not found in the dictionaries of Standard French, and thus presents as Canadianisms a whole host of vulgar and colloquial terms that belong to *le français populaire*, thus confusing the social variation of French speech with regional variation — an error that would not have been made by a professional lexicographer. Belisle also, by compiling from other dictionaries, incorporates into his dictionary of "Canadian French" words that belong to SF but are unknown and never heard in Canada. The strengths of Belisle's dictionary, on the other hand lie in its definitions, which are generally comprehensive, and the fact that it contains words not found elsewhere. As a source book, therefore, it is valuable, but as a dictionary, it must be used with the utmost caution since a good deal of its information is misleading.

For the most part the Acadian dialects had been neglected in all these works of Canadian lexicography. Acadian French, however, had had its own commentators. The most notable of these was Pascal Poirier, teacher in the Collège St.Joseph, which would some day grow into the Université de Moncton. In 1928 Poirier published *Le Parler franco-acadien et ses origines*, over three hundred pages of commentary on the history, grammar and sounds of Acadian. This is a most valuable collection of data but suffers, as do all such works, from the author's lack of linguistic training.

The lack of a comprehensive lexical study of Acadian was finally overcome in 1962 with the publication of Geneviève Massignon's monumental two volume *Les parlers français d'Acadie*. Massignon, a dialectologist from France, systematically toured Acadian villages, and dug into old documents to compile a lexicon of 8,000 items along with their transcriptions and a commentary linking each word to other regional usage.

Another major need that has now been filled is information on the regional distribution of much of the vocabulary of Canadian French. The *Atlas de l'Est du Canada* edited by Gaston Dulong at Laval University in Québec City, appeared in 1981 and gives the regional distribution of terms throughout Québec and the Maritime Provinces. A choice was made of 150 geographical points and the usage at these individual points recorded on the computer, the intention being to produce maps showing the distribution of the various lexical items. The data collected was so vast, however, that it was published in ten volumes without maps: it is a printout of the computerized information.

Information on Québécois usage has also been provided by teams working in recent years from the Université de Montréal and the Université de Sherbrooke. Studies in Montréal have concentrated on urban speech of Montréal and sociolinguistic investigations of language registers and attitudes. Both the Université de Montréal and the Université du Québec à Montréal base fundamental language and linguistics courses on the study of Québécois, so that large numbers are involved in the study and analysis of the regional form of the language. The Université de Montréal was the first Canadian university to have a Department of Linguistics, and for long years has maintained a graduate specialization in translation, one result of which has been the establishment of a computerized *Banque de Terminologie* which lists, among other things, both French and English terms for Canadian institutions and realities.

The computer has also been used by Normand Beauchemin and Pierre Martel at Sherbrooke where in 1979 they published their *Vocabulaire* *fondamental du québécois parlé*. This is a frequency list prepared on the computer from conversations arising from research interviews. They note, “On peut dire qu’il s’agit d’une langue commune de niveau plutôt familier avec, à l’occasion, quelques traits de style surveillé.”

Finally a *Trésor de la langue français au Québec* is in preparation at Laval University under the direction of Marcel Juneau and Claude Poirier. This will be a definitive work of Québécois lexicography, filling in the lacunes in the other works which have appeared over the last hundred years. It will have the support of other distinguished researchers at Laval, such as Luc Lacourcière, founder and director of Canada’s first Department of Folklore, and Gaston Dulong, editor of the ALEC who as inheritor of the files of the now defunct *Société du Parler français*, has been able to provide the project with a very rich documentation.

There has been so much written and published on Canadian French in the last ten years that it far outweighs even the substantial work of the previous two hundred years. A bibliography entitled *Le francais québécois*, prepared by Conrad Sabourin and Rolande Lamarche for the office de la langue française in Quebec, was published in 1979 as a 300-page volume. There has been so much recent work, in fact, that it is impossible to do it justice in the brief historical résumé of this chapter. Some of this work will, however, necessarily be discussed in certain of the chapters that follow: in the analyses of the phonology, morphology and syntax of Canadian French.

Further Reading

Almazan, Vincent. 1980. “Pierre Potier, premier lexicographe du français au Canada: son glossaire”, *Revue de linguistique romane* 44:304–340.

Halford, Peter. 1989. “Vers l’analyse moderne d’un texte canadien du dix-huitième siècle”, *JAPLA/RALPA* 11:57–72.

Juneau, Marcel. 1977. “Aperçu sur la lexicographie québécoise”, *Problèmes de lexicologie québécoise*:13–55. Québec: Presses de L’Université Laval.

EXERCISES

1. From Marcel Juneau's *Avant-propos* to the *Glossaire franco-canadien* of Oscar Dunn draw up a list of (a) the principal strengths, and (b) the principal weaknesses of the work.

2. Sylva Clapin, in the introduction to his dictionary of 1894, confuses letters and sounds (as was normal in nineteenth century works). From the lists he gives on pp. XVIII–XXIII give the following:

   (a) five examples of denasalization, and one corresponding hypercorrection.
   (b) ten examples of loss of the second element of a final consonant cluster
   (c) four examples of a regular phonetic change t → k. Give the conditions for this change.
   (d) seven examples of palatalisation of [n] before following yod. What curious title does Clapin give this simple assimilation?

3. What weaknesses in Dionne's work does Rivard point out in his review in the *Bulletin du parler français* (Vol. 7:361–379)?

4. From the Reports of the most recent census determine the number of people (a) of French ethnic origin, and (b) of French mother tongue in each of the Canadian Provinces. Also give each figure as a percentage of the province's population, as in the following example from the 1951 census:

Newfoundland	9,800 (descent)	2.7%
	2,300 (language)	0.6%

   What percentage of the population of Canada was (a) French speaking and (b) of French descent in the 1981 Census? In what three provinces has there been the most erosion of French mother tongue? In which two provinces the least erosion? What conclusions can you draw from the geographical positions of these five provinces?

5. The following Canadian expressions are also to be found regionally in France. From the *Glossaire du parler français* find which French province these words come from, and the indicate the region of France (North, West, Centre, etc.) each province belongs to.

	Canada	France	English
a.	beurrée n.f.	tartine	bread and butter
b.	broue n.f.	mousse	froth on beer
c.	crémer	glacer	to ice (a cake)
d.	tiraille n.f.	tendon	gristle
e.	restants n.m.pl.	restes	leftovers
f.	couloir n.m.	tamis	strainer
g.	bâtisse n.f.	édifice	building

6. When Canadian French words resemble English words, one may too easily conclude that they are Anglicisms. Using the *Glossaire* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, find the etymology of CF.Marmelade n.f. *confiture d'oranges* and fleur n.f. *farine*. In the OED find the origin of both *flower* and *flour*. Are *marmelade* and *fleur* (in the sense of "flour") anglicisms? If not, why do they so closely resemble the English words?