

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN CANADA

**Nataliya Mukan**

*Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine*  
nataliya.v.mukan@lpnu.ua

**Julia Shyika**

*Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine*  
Julia-shyika@ukr.net

**Oksana Shyika**

*Lviv Technical and Economic College of  
Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine*  
shyyka@ukr.net

The article deals with the study of the development of bilingual education in Canada. The research paper offers the results drawn from a broader qualitative study. We understand bilingualism as a linguistic ability of a person, as social circumstances, as social phenomenon or individual characteristics. Bilingual education in Canada is a phenomenon which is based on the integration of theories and concepts of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, history, linguistics and psycholinguistics. The analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature reveals that scientists all over the world research various aspects of bilingualism and development of bilingual education in different countries. According to the aim of the study, theoretical and applied (descriptive, statistical, comparative, inductive, deductive, analytical, logical, historical, chronological and retrospective analysis, prognostic) methods used in our research are presented. We determine and characterise political, historic, economic, social, cultural, religious, lingual factors which caused popularisation and spread of bilingual education in the country under research. We define the lower and upper boundary of our research as well as develop the periodisation of bilingual education development. We characterise the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education, its main forms, bilingual and traditional programmes, types of immersion programmes, realisation of bilingual education at pre-school, school and university levels.

**Keywords:** bilingualism; bilingual education; Canada; educational programmes; forms of bilingual education.

---

### Introduction

Political, economic, social and cultural development of modern society is based on the tendencies of globalisation and growth of competition in the international community. According to Granier (2013), highly educated people are an essential asset in today's global governance architecture. At the beginning of the 21st century, special attention is paid to the education, the main task of which is to prepare an individual for functioning in a multicultural society. It involves the ability to use more than one language as well as to cooperate with representatives of different cultures, nationalities, and religions from different social environment. Bilingual education is one of the basic means for providing the possibility of such training in the countries with two official languages. Such countries effectively implement the policy of enriching their society using the potential of the immigration processes. In multicultural society, bilingual education has a wide range of social, cultural and economic advantages. It provides avoiding of cultural and linguistic assimilation of national minorities, preserves their identity, decreases the probability of the development of social polarisation and social and political misunderstandings.

Understanding of the role and importance of bilingual education in the functioning of the society, governments of economically developed countries make everything possible for the development of the cohesive system of bilingual education and mechanisms of its implementation for their citizens. Canada, being a multicultural country with two official languages, has a long history of bilingual education. It also has considerable experience in its implementation at the beginning of the 21st century. The government of Canada aims to provide the possibility for mastering both official languages, languages of national minorities and immigrants as well as languages of indigenous peoples. The Pan-Canadian strategy "Learn Canada 2020" declares bilingual education development as one of the priorities of state educational policy.

The analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature reveals that scientists all over the world research various aspects of bilingualism and development of bilingual education in different countries. A great deal of previous research into bilingual education has focused on its social predetermination. Different theories exist in the literature regarding synergetics, multiculturalism, axiology of bilingual education. A large and growing volume of literature has investigated different approaches: paradigm, historical, holistic, integrative. There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of psychological, pedagogical, sociological, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic theories in bilingual education. Baker (2014) studies theoretical

fundamentals of bilingualism. Shyika and Mukan (2012), Schwartz, Koh, Chen, Sinke and Geva (2016) analyse the specificity of bilingual schooling. Scientists research linguistic, sociolinguistic, psychological and psycholinguistic, cultural, and historical aspects of bilingualism and bilingual learning: Cummins and Swain (2014), Grenier (2013), He (2011), Mady (2017), Roberts (1995), Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977), Schwartz (2016), etc.

The analysis presented in this article is drawn from a broader qualitative study, examining the development of bilingual education in Canada. Thus, the aim of the article is to suggest a periodisation of Canadian bilingual education development and to determine the specific features of implementation of bilingual education at the beginning of the 21st century.

The retrospective analysis gave us the possibility to determine the chronological boundaries and define the following facts. The Royal Proclamation which resulted in Great Britain acquisition of French territory in North America was issued in 1763. Therefore the year 1763 denotes the *lower boundary* of the research. The *upper boundary* (2014) marks the current state of the investigation of the problem.

The study was conducted according to the methodology of historical and pedagogical research (system, multicultural, historic, complex, integrative, paradigmatic, comparative approaches). According to the aim and objectives of our research, we have used theoretical and applied research methods. There is a number of theoretical instruments, namely descriptive, statistical and comparative methods, available for studying the specific features of bilingual education development and its provision in provinces and territories of Canada. The inductive and deductive methods have been used for data collection, generalisation and interpretation of some bilingual phenomena. The analytical method was particularly useful in obtaining various data on theoretical and applied aspects of bilingual education. The logical method offered an effective way to reveal a mechanism of creation of a set of concepts in bilingual education. The study used historical, chronological and retrospective analysis to gain insights into the development of bilingual education and justification of its periodisation. We utilised the prognostic method for justification of possibilities of Canadian experience application.

We have used applied methods, namely interviews with educators from Toronto for gaining authentic pedagogic materials; polls and questioning of teachers.

### **Theoretical and methodological fundamentals of bilingual education**

Various international organisations and associations that function in modern global environment study development of bilingualism and bilingual education. The bilingualism phenomenon is the research object of many scientists. Rising and spreading of bilingualism, as well as bilingual education, caused the development of corresponding regulatory documents. They provide admission to bilingual education for people of different ages and guarantee the right to study mother tongue or use it as means for studying.

We have studied the reasons for using several languages in one country. We should take into account linguistic diversity of a country, specific social or religious features of a community, desire to preserve national identity etc. that cause spreading and popularisation of bilingual education. The literature on bilingual education has highlighted several approaches to the interpretation of terms “bilingualism” and “bilingual education”. Much of the current literature on the problem pays particular attention to bilingualism as linguistic ability of a person, as social circumstances, as social phenomenon or individual characteristics. The analysis indicates that bilingual education is the phenomenon typical for a multicultural democratic society of Canada. According to Dewaele and Li Wei (2013) a high level of multilingualism and multiculturalism represents the kind of enduring sociocultural influence that can shape personality. Our findings enhance our understanding of bilingual education as an educational human activity aimed to acquire knowledge, develop skills as well as to form values and understanding on the basis of usage of two languages, one of which is native. According to Creese and Blackledge (2010), “teachers and students construct and participate in a flexible bilingual pedagogy in assemblies and classrooms. This pedagogy adopts a translanguaging approach and is used by participants for identity performance as well as the business of language learning and teaching” (p. 112).

The authors distinguish between various types of bilingualism: elective, circumstantial, school and cultural bilingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), which have different features and causes of their development. We have studied the advantages (efficiency of using the native language as means of teaching in general and mastering of second language in particular) as well as disadvantages (using bilingual education for assimilation of separate groups of population, such as national minorities, indigenous population or immigrants who have no other possibility to study native language and maintain national culture and traditions) of bilingual education.

A number of studies have postulated common features of bilingual academic programmes. We have found that Canada has the academic programmes of early, middle and late immersion. García and Sylvan (2011) argue that “education for bilingualism (i.e., to teach an additional language) includes types of programmes that are bilingual but also some that are monolingual” (p. 389). In contrast to immersion Canada also uses academic programmes of submersion. According to Swain and Cummins (2014), “immersion refers to a situation in which children from the same linguistic and cultural background who have had no prior contact with the school language are put together in a classroom setting in which the second language is used as the medium of instruction. Submersion, on the other hand, refers to the situation encountered by some children wherein they must make a home-school language switch, while others can already function in the school language” (p. 8).

We assume that bilingual education develops the more sensitive perception of other cultures and religions, promotes interest in cultures which are associated with certain languages, helps to understand differences, and prevents racism development and stereotype formation. Further analysis showed that bilingual education has great influence on the formation of self-esteem of language minorities’ children. Besides, fluent bilinguals have extensive experience in language switching that involves monitoring the situation to select the appropriate language, activating the selected language, and inhibiting the other language (Paap & Greenberg, 2013, p. 232). Baker (2014) underlines the importance of bilingual children’s mother tongue for their personal development and education. If a school does not provide any study of their native language, it becomes the place without their language and culture, the place where they are not accepted, the place where their self-identity is under question (Roberts, 1995, p. 20). Furthermore, Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) prove that the basis for the possible attainment of the threshold level of second language competence seems to be the level attained in the mother tongue. If in an early stage of its development a minority child finds itself in a foreign language learning environment without contemporaneously receiving the requisite support in its mother tongue, the development of its skill in the mother tongue will slow down or even cease, leaving the child without the basis for learning the second language well enough to attain the threshold level in it. It should be stated that their self-esteem can be boosted by bilingual education, or vice versa, can be dented if their mother tongue is substituted with the language of the majority.

### **Retrospective analysis of Canadian bilingual education development**

The current study has determined main preconditions of bilingualism and bilingual education development in Canada:

- Political and historical preconditions. The fall of New France and the rise of British colony contributed to the formation of new French-speaking minority on the British continent. This fact initiated gradual rise of bilingualism of population for further survival and development (Shyika, 2015).

- Economic preconditions. First European settlers had to master the language of the indigenous tribes of the continent to conduct trade and to ease their further voyages. Later, immigrants who were conducting business studied French and English to build up trade.

- Cultural preconditions. The official recognition of the culture of both founding nations lead to interest and attempts of Anglophones and Francophones to understand each other and resulted in rise and development of bilingualism.

- Religious preconditions. Catholic settlements near protestant cities, as well as shortage of catholic schools, forced Francophone children to study in English Protestant schools.

- Lingual preconditions. Official Language Act that came into force in 1969 ensures respect, equality of status and equal rights and privileges for all citizens, regardless of the official language they speak. This motivated citizens of Canada to study language and culture of both founding nations.

- Social preconditions. The necessity to communicate between English and French-speaking communities, the possibility to move freely across the country without any discomfort or language barrier, as well as urbanisation, industrialisation and the possibility of better employment caused spreading of bilingualism in Canada.

The study of historical, social, economic and cultural development of Canada gave the opportunity to conduct the retrospective analysis of bilingual education development and reasoning of its periodisation.

Period of time up to 1763 can be characterised by the foundation of first English and French settlements on the territory of contemporary Canada and their conducting trade with indigenous peoples. Thus, there arose a pressing need in studying languages of indigenous peoples of the continent and to teach Indians the language of the settlers.

From 1763 to 1867 the first schooling was introduced by priests who taught children in parishes. Also during this period, contemporary schools without teachers were established. After teaching their pupils basic skills of reading and writing, Jesuit monks gave them several handbooks for further self-studying. In several years monks returned to take handbooks back and to give them to other pupils. This period is characterised by official establishment of bilingual learning. In 1857 publicist, politician and educator E. Ryerson in a letter addressed to School Trustees of Charlottenburg sanctioned the use of both English and French in schooling. The letter runs: "Gentlemen, – I have the honour to state in reply to your letter of the 16<sup>th</sup> that as French is the recognised language of the country as well as English, it is quite proper and lawful for the trustees to allow both languages to be taught in their schools to children whose parents may desire them to learn both. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, Your obedient servant, E. Ryerson" (Sissins, 1917, p. 27).

Thus bilingual schools were officially recognised. At the same time not only French-English bilingual schools were established, but English-German as well.

In 1867 – 1969 the quality of education in bilingual schools was doubtful. García and Sylvan (2011) underline that at "the request of Anglophone parents in Quebec who wanted their children to become bilingual in order to participate in a Francophone Quebec that was gaining political power, Lambert and his associates developed an early immersion bilingual education programme in St. Lambert, a suburb of Montreal, in 1965" (p. 386). But bilingual schools of that period had overcrowded classes, poorly paid and unqualified teachers and in most cases, such schools were referred to as "unsatisfactory". Debates on the suitability of bilingual schooling also had religious background. Despite the lack of agreement among educators over the appropriateness of bilingual learning, during this period bilingual schools were also established in other countries, particularly in Germany, Poland and Ukraine, which can be attributed to the intensification of immigration flows.

Period of 1969 – till present began with the introduction of Official Languages Act which recognised English and French as official languages of Canada. Thus, all public institutions were obliged to provide services in English or French on the demand of the client. Furthermore, Federal Government initiated the employment of Francophone and bilingual civil servants. During this period French Immersion Programme was established and achieved great popularity.

Using the chronological approach to the study of development of bilingual education in Canada we distinguished three main periods: Period I (1763 – 1867) – spread of bilingualism and establishment of bilingual schooling; Period II (1867 – 1969) – intensification of struggle for preserving bilingual education; Period III (1969 – till present) – legalisation and extensive spread of bilingual education.

### **Features of bilingual education in Canada**

Analysing the implementation of bilingual education in Canada we have shown the specific features of its development at the beginning of the 21st century as well as examined the main tendencies of spreading of bilingual education in Canada. Due to the introduction of the federal policy of multiculturalism, new curricula have been developed for minority-language schools. At the beginning of the 21st century, Canadian schools use Immersion programmes which are notable for intensive second language learning.

In our study, we found that at the end of 20th – beginning of the 21st century Immersion programmes gained great popularity (He, 2011). Among the most popular we should mention Early immersion programme (starts in kindergarten or Grade 1); Middle immersion programme (starts in Grades 4-5); late immersion programme (starts in Grade 7) (Swain & Lapkin, 1982).

According to Schwartz, Koh, Chen, Sinke and Geva (2016), with the adoption of the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, English and French are protected throughout the provincial education systems, and therefore bilingual programmes are offered mainly in English or French. Apart from academic aims, French immersion programmes are designed to develop understanding and respect for Francophones, their traditions, and culture.

Economic, psychological, educational and social factors seem to be the main motivators for Anglophone students for learning the second official language.

In Canada, the main aim of bilingual kindergarten is the preparation of future students for further bilingual learning at schools. According to Nores and Barnett (2010), education in early childhood is significant for later developmental and educational outcomes. Parents decide if their child who is under 6 will attend kindergarten. Most children are enrolled in the kindergarten programme one year before entry to Grade 1. Pre-elementary education in Canada is not compulsory but recommended. French Immersion programmes are widely used and give opportunities to form and develop French language skills. Learning of the French language is continued in elementary school. Studying in kindergarten is complex and integral. The individual approach allows taking into consideration individual rate of study and development of

children as well as special needs of each child. To prepare children for entering Grade 1, teachers of kindergarten emphasise on the social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional development of a child. Official pre-school education can be conducted in heritage languages.

It has been discovered that provinces and territories of Canada are autonomous in organisation of the education system although every province has equal access to bilingual secondary schools, where students can learn official languages, languages of indigenous peoples and languages of national minorities (Shyika & Mukan, 2012). Such studying is provided by a range of programmes. We analysed the immersion programmes (early, middle, late; full, partial), Core French, Extended French, Intensive French etc. These programmes differ in intensity, duration, and teaching methods. One of the most popular programmes is French Immersion.

The research results show that education in Canada differs substantially from that in other countries. Immersion programmes in Canada refer to official languages which have equal status. That is why second language learning is viewed in the context of additive bilingualism.

We have analysed the opportunities of bilingual learning in Canadian universities and discovered that majority of them provide studying in the language that dominates in the province.

Sometimes, they introduce bilingual as well as second language courses. Some French higher education institutions offer non-Francophone students' academic, social and financial support (Canadian Parents for French, 2017). This support is provided in various forms, namely assistance in studying or, for example, in making home assignment in terms of language support; organising summer French immersion courses for Anglophones who plan to study in French; organising cultural events, students exchange programmes with universities of Quebec or French-speaking countries. To encourage students to study in French, Canadian universities broaden extra-curricular activities, which help them to improve their French, provide the possibility to develop the transferable skills for business and everyday communication, help to understand culture and traditions of Canadian Francophones.

## **Conclusions**

We found out that in the modern international community the scientific problem of bilingualism and bilingual education holds a key position. Economic, psychological, educational, social, career and cultural factors cause the spread and popularisation of bilingual education. The study has demonstrated that the Early immersion programme (starts in kindergarten or Grade 1); Middle immersion programme (starts in Grade 4-5); Late immersion programme (starts in Grade 7) are peculiar to Canadian system of education, as well as bilingual education in heritage languages. Availability of the educational programmes for Francophones and Anglophones, representatives of indigenous people, immigrants etc. is the specific feature of the development of bilingual education in Canada at the beginning of the 21st century.

The evidence from this study suggests that the modern system of bilingual education in the country under research comprises early childhood education and development, schooling as well as post-secondary and higher education institutions. It has been found that the main aim of bilingual kindergartens in Canada is the preparation of future students for further bilingual learning at schools. Pre-school education in Canada is not obligatory. French immersion programmes are widely used and give the opportunity to form skills in French that are further developed in elementary school. Besides official languages, heritage language programmes are available in kindergartens.

Provinces and territories of Canada are autonomous in organisation of the education system although every province has equal access to bilingual secondary schools, where students can learn official languages, languages of indigenous peoples and languages of national minorities. The main programmes are: immersion programmes (early, middle, late, total, partial), Core French, Extended French, Intensive French etc.

The majority of higher education institutions of Canada provide education using the dominant language of the province or introduce bilingual courses. Special opportunities and financial support exist for Anglophone students who are studying in French.

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice and theoretical research.

## **References:**

- Baker, C. (2014). *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism* (4th ed.). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Canadian Parents for French. (2017). *CPF Guide for Bilingual Youth 2017*. Retrieved January, 17, 2017, from <http://cpf.ca/en>.
- Creese, A. & Blackledge A. (2010). Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom: A Pedagogy for Learning and Teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94 (1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>
- Dewaele, J.-M. & Li Wei. (2013). Is Multilingualism Linked to a Higher Tolerance of Ambiguity? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 16, 231–240. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1366728912000570>

- García, O. & Sylvan, C.E. (2011). Pedagogies and Practices in Multilingual Classrooms: Singularities in Pluralities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95 (3), 385–400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01208.x>
- Grenier, F. (2013). The global educational challenge: how Canada can contribute to global developmental solutions through innovation in higher education. *Canadian foreign policy journal*, 19 (3), 354–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2013.845581>.
- He, A.E. (2011). Educational decentralization: a review of popular discourse on Chinese–English bilingual education. *Asia Pacific journal of education*, 31 (1), 91–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2011.544245>
- Nores, M. & Barnett, W.S. (2010). Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions Across the World: (Under)Investing in the Very Young. *Economics of Education Review*, 29 (2), 271–282. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.001>
- Paap, K.R. & Greenberg, Z.I. (2013). There Is No Coherent Evidence for a Bilingual Advantage in Executive Processing. *Cognitive Psychology*, 66 (2), 232–258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogpsych.2012.12.002>
- Roberts, Ch.A. (1995). Bilingual education program models: a framework for understanding. *Bilingual research journal*, 19 (3–4), 369–378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.1995.10162679>
- Schwartz, M., Koh, P.W., Chen, B.X., Sinke, M. & Geva E. (2016). Through the lens of teachers in two bilingual programmes: a look at early bilingual education. *Language, culture and curriculum*, 29 (2), 141–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2015.1103250>
- Sissins, C.B. (1917). *Bi-lingual Schools in Canada*. London, England: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1981). *Bilingualism or Not: The Education of Minorities*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Swain, M., & Cummins, J. (2014). *Bilingualism in Education: Aspects of theory, research and practice*. New York, USA: Routledge.
- Swain, M. & Lapkin, S. (1982). *Evaluating Bilingual Education: a Canadian Case Study*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Toukomaa, P. & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1977). *The Intensive Teaching of the Mother Tongue to Migrant Children of Pre-school Age and Children in the Lower Level of Comprehensive School*. Helsinki, Finland: The Finnish National Commission for UNESCO.
- Shyika, Yu.I. (2015). *Bilinhvalna osvita v Kanadi* [Bilingual Education in Canada]. Lviv, Ukraine: ZUKTS.
- Shyika, Yu.I. & Mukan, N.V. (2012). Osoblyvosti bilinhvalnoho navchannia v kanadskykh zahalnoosvitnikh shkolakh [The Peculiarities of Bilingual learning in Canadian secondary schools]. *Comparative Professional Pedagogy*, 2 (4), 91–97.

Received: May 4, 2017

Accepted: October 25, 2017