

William F. Mackey

Organizing Research on Bilingualism: The ICRB Story

Only ten years ago the International Center for Research in Bilingualism came into being under international auspices, at Laval University in Quebec City. It found itself with an immense task to do in simply clearing the ground and systematising work already done, let alone in indicating key research in a field which meanwhile was receiving urgent and highly politicised attention in the Center's immediate community. Like any pioneering institution, it quickly discovered alarming gaps in what was known, notwithstanding a need to know that concerned millions of people all over the face of the globe. Professor Mackey, a participant in the Centre since before its foundation, here delineates its work and its problems in documentation, in research, and in the various publication series it has initiated.

Bombs going off in Montreal mailboxes in the early sixties awoke some Canadians to the realization that a few of their compatriots were being driven to desperate acts by a deep sense of ethnic injustice. This, coupled with mass demonstrations against the inequitable treatment of French-speaking Canadians, motivated the creation of numerous committees in many private and public sectors, especially in those parts of the country where French-English language contact was greatest.

Because the escalating conflict was language-related, these committees — mostly anglophone — called themselves committees on bilingualism. Their main concern was to find ways of making members of their respective organizations more bilingual, which in most cases meant learning French.

In the meantime, the federal government, concerned with the political and social implications of the conflict, agreed in 1964 to the creation of a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism with in-

structions to investigate the relationship between "the two founding races" and to make recommendations to parliament. With a generous budget and all the powers conferred by the investigations act, the Commission first created, under the direction of social scientists seconded from the universities, a large research establishment in which the question of language conflict in Canada was studied, not so much as one of language learning, but mostly as a problem in political science. Of the more than a hundred university teachers and graduate students who participated in the research few had ever studied questions of language contact or tackled language-related problems in their previous work. Scholars from abroad who had studied such questions were brought in as consultants, and research was commissioned on the solutions to problems of language contact in other bilingual countries. Even though much of this commissioned research was not directly relevant to the Canadian situation, knowledge of the language problems of other countries did contribute to the realization that the language problems of Canada were far from unique.

At the outset, the Commissioners had naturally expected that they could rely on expertise on bilingualism which they supposed existed in the Canadian universities. After considerable searching, however, it became evident that no university had made bilingualism a special field of study and that the expected degree of expertise was non-existent. No university in Canada had had the foresight or the sense of academic responsibility to make bilingualism a program of study and research. Indeed, within the existent traditional compartmentalization of knowledge as promulgated by the universities there was nothing that permitted the study of bilingualism as a main preoccupation. The little research that had been done was confined within the framework of traditional disciplines in which bilingualism was used, from time to time, as an indicator to contribute to the argument of some theory in linguistics, psychology, sociology or education. When the academics who had run across problems of language contact while working within their respective disciplines were called upon to testify before the Commission, they were honestly unable to answer some of its most basic questions. These questions had never been the object of study or research within their universities, which, organized as they were into departments each devoted to the advancement of "knowledge" in a traditional "field", encouraged studies which were variations on a fashionable paradigm, often with exclusive reference to a data base outside Canada.

Meanwhile, outside the universities, committees on "bilingualism" multiplied, and anyone with a magic formula for teaching French was actively sought. Since every organization seemed to be doing its bit, it was thought that perhaps the universities should also be making some sort of contribution. Accordingly, the executive of the Association of Canadian Universities and Colleges came up with the idea of a university institute devoted to the study of bilingualism, as that concept was then understood. The idea was as vague as the notion of bilingualism. But as the suggestion circulated, it eventually became precise enough to become a proposal.

It was argued that such an institute should be situated in a part of the country where the need to use English and French was of sufficient importance to attract enough local support to assure survival; it was further suggested that the institute be located at a university with sufficient academic resources and specialized staff to create a nucleus for research. What first came to mind were the universities in the Montreal area, surrounded as they were with the everyday problems of bilingualism and containing well-staffed research groups in such fields as social psychology and linguistics. Problems arose, however, with the choice of university. It was also felt that the ethnic conflict in Montreal at that time was so tense and the issues so polarized that the creation of such an institute could be misinterpreted as a vexatious gesture. Later events were to prove this assessment to be correct.

Location in Quebec City

Situated at a distance of almost two hundred miles from Montreal, the city of Quebec, it was thought, was far enough from the conflict and yet sufficiently concerned as the capital of the province to serve as an appropriate location for research on bilingualism. Its three-hundred-year old institutions of higher learning, emerging from a long period of academic traditionalism, were rapidly expanding into new fields. Its university had been the first in Canada to launch a program of study in linguistics, it had created the first language laboratory in America, and had organized a division of language didactics with specialists in such fields as language testing, lexicometrics, method analysis and instrumental didactics. More important, it had already initiated courses in the field of language contact. It was with these considerations in mind that the executive of the Association invited Laval University to consider the creation of an institute on bilingualism. Yet it was with some hesitation that the university accepted the challenge. In the first place, it had no funds to launch such a venture. Despite the moral support and backing of the Association, it was unable to obtain funding either locally, provincially or nationally, in spite of the avowed interest of the governments in the promotion of bilingualism. After two years of planning, budgeting, and unsuccessful attempts to obtain funds from any Canadian source, the university turned to the United States. With the encouragement of the Association, the university prepared a submission to the Ford Foundation. With what now appears to be considerable foresight, this foundation had already studied the need for some sort of clearing house of information on the problems of bilingualism and ethnic conflict which were just beginning to surface in the United States, and, indeed, in many parts of the globe.

After studying the submission for almost a year, the Ford Foundation came to the decision, at the end of December 1966, to support the creation of an international centre for research on bilingualism, with a modest terminal three-year grant of almost half a million dollars in "seed money" — that is, the Foundation was willing to take the

risk of helping launch such a centre on the understanding that Canada would find the means to assure its survival.

News of the grant first appeared in the *New York Times* and only much later in any Canadian newspaper, that is, after the University Senate on January 7, 1967, had formally founded the International Centre for Research on Bilingualism (Centre international de recherche sur le bilinguisme). The news was not accepted with much enthusiasm in the Canadian press. Some Montreal newspapers criticized the character of the Centre. There were even rumours that it was a sort of Trojan horse designed to speed up the Anglicization of the French universities.

Design and function of the Centre

Yet much thought had gone into the constitution of the Centre. It had become evident that such a research organization could not have, as its goal, the promotion of bilingualism. As a university research centre it was to be devoted to the observation and study of the phenomenon of language contact. Since the phenomenon was so widespread, one could not expect to understand it by limiting one's observations to the local scene. Basic research required that evidence from other areas of the globe be considered. The outlook of the centre, therefore, had to be more than local or national; it had to be multinational and international. It also had to be multidisciplinary, and ideally, interdisciplinary, since no single discipline could encompass the multi-dimensional problems of bilingualism.

Such a centre had to be a place where the study of bilingualism was a central preoccupation and not the marginal one that it had always been in university departments. It also had to be a place where anyone planning research on a problem in language contact could find out whether anything of the kind had been done before, and, if so, where it was done and what methods were used and what results were reported. Since no such place existed anywhere, this suggested that the first efforts would have to be devoted to the enormous task of documenting international and multidisciplinary publications written in dozens of different languages, treating questions of contact between hundreds of others. In undertaking such a venture it was imperative to avoid duplication of effort. Related areas with adequate bibliographic resources were excluded on principle. Thus, the professional literature of the language teacher was not included, since other international organizations were already providing ongoing bibliographies in the field. A fine line had to be drawn, however, between such professional literature of the "how to" type and the reports of investigations into second language acquisition, which could not be excluded from any documentation on bilingualism.

It was likewise important to avoid duplication in research expenditure. For example, large cities like Montreal and Toronto were

obviously in a better position to undertake the type of survey and experimental research dependent upon the selection of samples from large numbers of people. The availability in Montreal of schools of different types, for example, made that city suitable for certain types of experiment in bilingual education. Although many large-scale experiments were beyond its scope, the Centre could and did document the results of all experiments on which information could be obtained. Another limitation upon research was the fact that funds for the Centre had to be allocated to the creation of research facilities. It was understood that the Centre, like many others, was to help its members seek funds for specific projects within the Centre's terms of reference.

Thirdly it was necessary to make the results of the research on bilingualism known to the public. This objective resulted in the involvement of the Centre in an ongoing program of publication.

In sum, the basic activities of the Centre were defined as international and interdisciplinary research, documentation and publication on bilingualism, biculturalism and related phenomena. To these were added important secondary activities which included the organization of periodic international symposia on specific problems, series of monthly public lectures, and a modest information service.

It was perhaps inevitable that, before the Centre became fully operational, the organizers had to experience some false starts and even to commit a number of downright mistakes. One of these was over-organization. At the start, the problems seemed so enormous that they were divided into groups represented by divisions in a somewhat over-elaborate organization chart. From the chart the organizers then proceeded to fill in the squares but without being able to find the right people. It should of course have been obvious that, if the Centre had been founded to fill a gap in Canada's expertise on bilingualism, this same Centre could not be staffed with the non-existent Canadian experts. Recruitment from abroad was equally unsuccessful. It was difficult to attract competent scholars away from tenured appointments to a Centre with a three-year budget and a status, within the university financial division, of a terminal research project. The Centre was fortunate, however, to secure the help of an international advisory board of five specialists on different aspects of bilingualism.

With the termination of the three-year trial period and of the funding, the university was faced with the problem of incorporating the Centre into its existing structures. The Centre had therefore to be re-organized as an interdisciplinary non-departmental research centre in conformity with the structures of other such centres maintained by the university, and like them to be governed by the same sort of statutory inter-faculty board of directors, which replaced the international advisory board and became the sole arbiter of policy. Since 1970 therefore, the Centre has thus functioned under an executive director responsible to a board of directors appointed by the Univer-

sity Senate from all faculties with possible interest in research on bilingualism — law, education, social sciences and letters, and particularly such departments as comparative law, psychology, didactics, sociology, anthropology, political sciences, languages and linguistics.

What has the Centre achieved?

After ten years of operation one has the right to ask what such a centre has achieved. This question is best answered separately for each of the basic activities and purposes — documentation, research and publication.

In the area of documentation, the Centre has brought together one of the largest collections of documents devoted to the study of bilingualism and language contact. It has compiled a general reference bank of some twenty thousand titles, each flagged with half a dozen descriptors and computerized for title retrieval and multiple and automatic indexing. These titles, in some sixty different languages other than English and French, have been translated into one of these languages. The documentation division of the Centre has also compiled a number of more specialized bibliographies on such topics as child bilingualism, language testing, and the language problem of specific areas of the world such as Canada, China and Eastern Europe.

The documentation library of the Centre contains thousands of unpublished documents on bilingualism and language contact, including those of several government commissions like the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Laurendeau-Dunton), the Commission of Inquiry into Language Training in the Public Service (Bibeau), the Bilingual Districts Advisory Boards (Duhamel and Fox), the Language Attitudes Research Committee of the Irish Republic, and the Commission on the status of the French Language in Quebec (Gendron), of which it became the documentary depository.

As for research, the Centre has undertaken a number of small-scale and a few large-scale projects, some still in progress. The purpose of the large-scale projects had been to provide basic tools for further research. One of these projects has to do with language demography. Since there are more than three thousand languages in the world and less than two hundred countries to house them, language contact has been recognized as a world-wide phenomenon. Which languages are in contact with which, however, and where the contacts are located, are questions which hitherto have been impossible to answer. A major project of the Centre was thus devoted to the linguistic composition of the nations of the world, covering geographic and demographic contact and distribution of some 3,000 languages, including of course not only such international languages as English and French, but also the tongues of the stateless Fourth World, which also have some surprising distribution patterns — from the Welsh of the Argen-

tine to the Basque of Puerto Rico. The research has already been completed for three areas of the world, Central and Western South Asia (published), Oceania, and Europe; results on the Americas will be published in two volumes.

In spite of the increase in the number of language revival movements in the context of a general drift toward regionalism, separatism and irredentism, it is evident that not all vernaculars are viable as national languages nor are they viable as media of instruction. Before language policies for new states can be made, it is important to know the relative status and potential of each of the languages available to a given population. This is the purpose of a related large-scale project in geolinguistics devoted to the degree of standardization and modes of use of the languages of the world. In this project all the languages of North America have been covered to date, and the results of the investigation will soon be published.

Persons who know more than one of these languages have rarely mastered them equally well nor do they use them always for the same purposes. Bilingualism is a matter of degree, and any research on individual bilingualism must take this into account. This supposes the use of instruments to measure the degree of bilingualism and language acquisition. It is true that much has been written about the problems of measurement, and many language tests of varying merit and purpose have been developed in different countries. What the researcher needs, however, is to find out which tests are available and what can be done with them. It is to fill this need that another large-scale project was launched almost a decade ago in three related areas of linguistic measurement — language test analysis, test development, and documentation on language testing. Since that time some six hundred language tests have been analyzed and the results published in two volumes; two tests with alternate and equivalent forms have been developed and standardized; and an analytic bibliography of writings on language testing of five hundred titles has been completed.

Specific projects

Although general wide-ranging and basic research such as the above is the indispensable core of an organization which claims to be interdisciplinary and international, it is only normal that specific projects should be centered in the surrounding community and be devoted to the problems of the state which supports the Centre. The most immediate of these is a sociolinguistic inquiry into the language contact and language varieties in Quebec City. Another in-house project is a psycholinguistic investigation into the effects of interlinguistic exchanges.

In addition to these basic and community-related in-house research projects, there are a few other research programs on specific problems

in language contact such as bilingual education, linguistic nationalism, and language policy analysis. Some of this work, however, is done outside the Centre either by members of the staff alone or in collaboration with other centres or outside scholars.

The program of studies in bilingual education was launched to fill the need of parents and educators for information on successful bilingual schooling — the need for case studies on bilingual education such as language immersion in Montreal, the free alternation type of bilingualism, in Berlin, and the structured bilingual-bicultural program of the biethnic schools in Miami. So far, eight studies have been published.

Research into the implications of linguistic nationalism and irredentism was initiated at the Centre in 1975. One report has been published. The Centre has also participated in language policy analysis, mostly in relation to the work of government language commissions.

In 1975 the Centre was evaluated by an independent commission appointed by the Government of Quebec. The results of the evaluation were favourable enough to gain for the ICRB the status of a centre recognized by the government as worthy of ongoing support, and a three-year plan of development was requested. The plan was submitted and approved the following year.

The plan comprises a number of major research programs. In addition to the above-mentioned, already in progress, new programs were launched in the sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics of bilingualism, comparative language policy, bilingual education, diglossia, and differential linguistics.

The sociolinguistic program includes a study of the language usage and language attitudes of Quebec adolescents. The psycholinguistics program comprises a study of the perceptual system of bilinguals, an evaluation of the effects of language contact on language attitudes, and an analysis of the role of language models in infant language acquisition. In the area of language policy the emphasis has been on the effects of language legislation on language survival. Projects within this program include a study of the language question in Quebec during the decade 1968-77, and a comparative study of language policies in Canada and in France.

The bilingual education program is aimed at supplying descriptive studies of bilingual education in various parts of the world. The research on diglossia includes a study of the functional distribution of writing in bilingual areas of the French-speaking world.

The research program in differential linguistics is devoted mostly to a comparative study of the English and French languages. Within

this program is a large-scale five-year laboratory study of the comparative phonology of English and French. Emphasis is placed on those aspects of differential phonetics on which no work has been done. These include the catenation and junction systems of the two languages, and the techniques and instrumentation needed to analyze these systems — new types of spectrography, of cineradiology and photopalatographic techniques. Although the differential linguistics of English and French have dominated this program, it also includes a special study devoted to the Amerindian languages, particularly those of Quebec. The first language to be studied in this context is Montagnais, a language spoken on the lower north shore of the St. Lawrence River.

All this research is of little use, however, unless the results are made known and distributed to places where they may be of practical use. That is why the third main activity of the Centre has been in the field of publication. In the past decade the Centre has published more than a hundred books, ranging in volume from less than a hundred to more than a thousand pages. These are of different types and fill different needs, which have been classified into six categories or series: definitive studies such as the one on New Canadians in Montreal, Quebec's language policy, French and English in North America (studies published for the Centre by Laval University Press as Series A); research reports, theoretical innovations, important papers and conference pre-prints (published in-house by the Centre as Series B); books published by special arrangement with outside publishers (Series C) including the *Studies in Bilingual Education* (Series C-100), eight volumes of which have been published in cooperation with Newbury House; off-prints of articles by members of the Centre (Series D); surveys and inventories such as *The Linguistic Composition of the Nations of the World*, and *The Written Languages of the World* (Series E); and finally, general and specialized bibliographies on bilingualism and language contact (Series F).

Not all these publications are the work of full-time researchers at the Centre. Some are the results of one or more terms of residence by visiting scholars who have spent all or part of their leave at the Centre on projects accepted by the Board as likely to advance the Centre's objectives. In the past these scholars have come from various parts of Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, France, Germany, Britain, Soviet Union, Africa and the Middle East. Some publications are the work of associate members who have regular teaching loads in various departments of the University combined with a special research interest in problems of bilingualism and language contact.

Much of the material in the large-scale surveys and bibliographies depends on the collaboration of correspondents in some forty countries. Cooperation with other centres studying language-related problems has been most helpful. Outside collaboration has also been essential for the organization of the biennial symposia. These are small

gatherings of invited specialists from whom papers are commissioned on specific topics. The papers are sent to other specialists for analysis, comment and completion. Papers and commentaries are then pre-printed and distributed for study prior to the international symposium. The last symposium, for example, was devoted to the use of typologies in the study of language minorities, while the preceding one was on multilingual political systems. The results of both of these seminars have appeared as books (in Series A). The Centre, which in 1969 was recognized by Unesco as an international organization, has also participated in the planning of other such meetings, such as the important centennial seminar on the description and measurement of bilingualism held in Moncton in 1967, the results of which were published by Toronto University Press in a seminal book which has since been repeatedly quoted in many countries.

Wanted: a long-term training program

In retrospect, one of the clearest lessons learned during the past decade at the Centre is that it takes more than money to solve the language problems and ethnic conflicts which push people to the desperate acts witnessed in the sixties in Montreal. This lesson has had to be learned over and over again in Canada and the United States, as testified by the experience of most government language projects in Canada and by the NDEA and bilingual education programs in the United States. It sometimes takes a generation to form the personnel needed to spend the research money for the purposes for which it was intended.

What is needed is not more million-dollar contracts but a modest long-term training program, the purpose of which would be to provide a sure reserve of scholars equipped to undertake interdisciplinary research on bilingualism. This supposes specific multidisciplinary training in the problems and methods of research on bilingualism. Problem-oriented education includes the study of language contact as treated in such disciplines as law, psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, linguistics, geography and political science. Methods include training in the techniques of experimentation, language analysis, survey research, data processing and statistics. Since the Centre is not permitted to do any teaching it cannot undertake such training. Members of the Centre have, however, used the resources for their graduate seminars in such areas as language contact, research methods, language testing and lexicometrics.

Some publications by the Centre are listed below. For a complete list and other information, write to:

International Center for Research on Bilingualism,
Grand Séminaire, Université Laval,
Québec, G1K 7P4

Série A — Etudes/Studies

- Savard, Jean-Guy & Jack C. Richards. *Les indices d'utilité du vocabulaire fondamental français*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970, 172 p.
- Kloss, Heinz. *Les droits linguistiques des Franco-Américains aux Etats-Unis*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1971, 84 p.
- Falch, Jean. *Contribution à l'étude du statut des langues en Europe*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973, 284 p.
- Dorion, Henri & Christian Morissonneau (colligés et présentés/editors). *Les noms de lieux et le contact des langues / Place Names and Language Contact*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1972, 374 p.
- Laforge, Lorne. *La sélection en didactique analytique*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1972, 383 p.
- Touret, Bernard. *L'aménagement constitutionnel des Etats de peuplement composite*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973, 260 p.
- Mepham, Michael S. *Computation in Language Text Analysis*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973, 234 p.
- Cappon, Paul. *Conflit entre les Néo-Canadiens et les francophones de Montréal*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974, 288 p.
- Savard, Jean-Guy & Richard Vigneault (présentation/présentation). *Les états multilingues: problèmes et solutions / Multilingual Political Systems: Problems and Solutions*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1975, 591 p.
- Breton, Roland J.-L. *Atlas géographique des langues et des ethnies de l'Inde et du subcontinent*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1976, 648 p.
- Snyder, Emile & Albert Valdman (présentation). *Identité culturelle et francophonie dans les Amériques*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1976, 290 p.
- Darbelnet, Jean. *Le français en contact avec l'anglais en Amérique du Nord*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1976, 146 p.
- Mallea, John R. (compiled and edited). *Quebec's Language Policies: background and response*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977, 309 p.
- Equipe de professeurs de l'Université Laval. *Test Laval: formule A, classement en français langue seconde*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1971.
- Equipe de professeurs de l'Université Laval. *Test Laval: formule B, formule C, classement en français langue seconde*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1976.

Série C — Publications extérieures/Outside publications

- Savard, Jean-Guy, *La valence lexicale*. Paris, Didier, 1970, 236 p.
- Mackey, William F. *Le bilinguisme: phénomène mondial / Bilingualism as a World Problem*. Montreal, Harvest House, 1967, 119 p.
- Mackey, William F., Jean-Guy Savard & Pierre Ardouin. *Le vocabulaire disponible du français*. Montréal, Didier Canada, 1971, 2 volumes, 900 p.
- Stern, H. H. (rédacteur). *L'enseignement des langues et l'écolier. Rapport d'un colloque international*. (Traduit au CIRB sous la direction de William F. Mackey). Hambourg, Institut de l'Unesco pour l'éducation, 1971, 254 p.
- Kloss, Heinz. *Laws and Legal Documents Relating to Problems of Bilingual Education in the United States*. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1971, 92 p.
- Mackey, William F. *Principes de didactique analytique*. (Révisé et traduit par Lorne Laforge). Paris, Didier, 1972, 713 p.
- Mackey, William F. & Albert Verdoodt (editors). *The Multinational Society*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1975, 388 p.
- Giordan, Henri & Alain Ricard (sous la direction). *Diglossie et littérature*. Bordeaux-Talence, Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1976, 184 p.
- Mackey, William F. *Bilinguisme et contact des langues*. Paris, Klincksieck, 1976, 539 p.
- Mackey, William F., Jacob Ornstein & al. *The Bilingual Education Movement: essays on its progress*. El Paso, Texas Western Press, 1977, 153 p.

C 100 —

Studies in Bilingual Education. **William F. Mackey, editor**

- Mackey, William F. *Bilingual Education in a Binational School: a study of equal language maintenance through free alternation*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1972, 185 p.
- Spolsky, Bernard (editor). *The Language Education of Minority Children: selected readings*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1972, 200 p.
- Lambert, Wallace E. & G. Richard Tucker. *Bilingual Education of Children: the St. Lambert experiment*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1972, 248 p.
- Cohen, Andrew D. *A Sociolinguistic Approach to Bilingual Education: Experiments in the American Southwest*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1975, 352 p.
- Gaarder, Bruce A. *Bilingual Schooling and the Survival of Spanish in the United States*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1977.
- Kloss, Heinz. *The American Bilingual Tradition*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1977, 347 p.
- Mackey, William F. & Theodore Andersson (editors). *Bilingualism in Early Childhood*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1977, 443 p.
- Mackey, William F. & Von Nieda Beebe. *Bilingual Schools for a Bicultural Community*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1977, 223 p.