

# Language and globalized discourse: Two case studies of Francophone minorities in Canada

**Sylvie Roy**

*University of Calgary*

University of Calgary  
Faculty of Education  
EDT 1116, 2500 University Dr. NW  
Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4  
syroy@ucalgary.ca

## **Abstract**

The globalized discourse creates a strong economic control over the value of cultural and linguistic goods. It also brings an importance to local authenticity. In this paper, I examine the globalized discourse as lived by two Francophone minorities in Canada. I have chosen a call centre and the tourism industry to illustrate how Francophone minorities have to adapt themselves to the rules of the global economy. The call centre promotes a standardized communication which devalues the French varieties of the Francophone community. At the same time it allows a new definition of what it is to be bilingual. The tourism industry uses linguistic and cultural goods to attract new markets. Authentic products and the advertising of French are promoted in order to upgrade the economy of the local Francophone community. The legitimate group that is taking care of the Francophone business and tourism is facing challenges with the majority and the minority groups. The value of French is controversial. These two examples show how Francophone minorities are adapting to the globalized world in their own ways. The study of linguistic practices in specific fields permits us to better understand the link between the global economy and the conception of new Francophone identities.

**Key words:** globalized discourse, Francophone minorities, commodification of language, local versus global, standardization, authenticity, call centre, tourism.

## **Resumo**

O discurso globalizado produce un férreo control económico sobre o valor dos bens culturais e lingüísticos. Así mesmo isto incide na autenticidade local. Neste artigo

examino o discurso globalizado vivido por dúas minorías francófonas no Canadá. Escollín un centro de atención de chamadas e mais a industria turística para ilustrar como as minorías francófonas se teñen adaptado por si mesmas ás regras da economía global. O centro de atención de chamadas promove unha comunicación estandarizada que deprecia as variedades do francés da comunidade francófona; ó mesmo tempo, isto comporta unha nova definición do que é ser bilingüe. A industria turística utiliza bens lingüísticos e culturais para atraer novos mercados; promove produtos auténticos publicitados en francés, coa finalidade de que a comunidade francófona local prospere. O grupo lexitimado para coidar dos negocios e do turismo francófonos está a afrontar cambios nos grupos maioritarios e minoritarios. O valor do francés é controvertido. Estes dous casos mostran como as minorías francófonas se están a adaptar polos seus propios medios ó mundo globalizado. O estudo das practicas lingüísticas en eidos concretos permítenos comprender mellor a relación entre a economía global e a concepción das novas identidades francófonas.

**Palabras clave:** discurso globalizado, minorías francófonas, comodificación da lingua, local versus global, estandarización, autenticidade, centro de atención de chamadas, turismo.

## 1. Introduction

Being French or Francophone in Canada meant, in the past, that one spoke the French language and lived in a French Canadian culture. Language and culture were part of the identity of the group both in Québec (majority French speaking province in Canada) and elsewhere in Canada. At the present time, it is still possible for some members of the Francophone minority outside Québec to live as Francophone in their own community. However, we expect to hear more and more about being bilingual and being part of two cultural worlds, French and English, in communities where the Francophone minority coexists with the Anglophone majority. At the same time, globalization and the exchange of goods and communication bring linguistic competencies, especially bilingual and multilingual competencies, and cultural resources to light. Communication skills and cultural distinctions become a commodity that one can exchange or sell (Heller, 1999; Cameron, 2000). These conditions are changing the way people perceive bilingualism. In the past, being a Francophone was part of an ethnic dimension of a person in a specific community; now, being bilingual permits anyone who can use their languages competently to access different resources (such as jobs and cultural exchanges) and to gain symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991).<sup>1</sup> These conditions also provide an opportunity for

<sup>1</sup> More and more, we also see multilingual people (new immigrants and children of immigrant families in big cities) that know three or four languages and wish to learn French in order to

minorities to sell their local and authentic products (Roy & Gélinas, 2004; Roy, 2005). Authentic products represent products that are part of the cultural and traditional history of a particular group<sup>2</sup> or represent the tradition of a site such as the settlement of a French speaking population. The phenomena that we are experiencing right now is the commodification of language, standardization for national and international communication and the valuing of local characteristics in the global markets of culture and tourism (Heller, 1999). These three phenomena constitute the globalized discourse described by a group of researchers conducting research in Canadian “Francophonie” (Heller, 2002; Budach, Roy & Heller, 2003; Heller & Labrie, 2003). Transformations in French Canada are related to economical, political and social structures and brought some discursive changes in social activities. With their studies, Heller, Labrie and collaborators wanted to situate what discourses are in circulation, how they construct themselves in new conditions where links between language, identity, nation and State are shifting (Heller & Labrie, 2003). The first discourse<sup>3</sup> is the traditional discourse which describes the French speaking people as part of one of the first groups to establish itself in Canada.<sup>4</sup> They built their communities around the church and Francophone associations. People who create these discourses by their day to day interactions are arguing for their rights as first group to settle. In the past, it was also used by Francophone elite to legitimize their own power over the majority of Francophone, most of them peasant by sharing the power with Anglophones. The second discourse is the modern discourse where Francophone uses the political arena to obtain rights

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attain social and cognitive resources (Dagenais & Day, 1998). In an ethnographic research that I am conducting (Roy, 2004-2007), I meet a lot of immigrant parents and students in French Immersion that wish to acquire French to be part of the globalized world and to gain access to Canadian resources in French and English (and probably in the future in their first language). These students will have three or four languages when they enter the workforce.

<sup>2</sup> There are French Canadian products that are known as being from the Francophone culture such as meat pie and sugar products (sugar pies, sugar squares). Even if maple syrup and its derivatives are from Eastern Canada, Francophone in the Western part of Canada still consider maple products as one of their traditional authentic products. There are no maple trees in Western Canada.

<sup>3</sup> I take the definition of Candlin (1997: viii) for the term discourse: “Discourse is a means of talking and writing about and acting upon worlds, a means which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices within these worlds, and in so doing both reproduces and constructs afresh particular socio-discursive practices, constrained or encouraged by more macro movements in the overarching social formation”.

<sup>4</sup> The Aboriginal people were also first to settle, but history pushed them aside. I won’t talk about these issues at this point for this paper.

and privileges. People producing this discourse take particular laws to gain access to services and rights such as schooling. The third discourse is the globalized discourse which sees language practices and identities as part of the economic domain. People who produce this discourse see language and cultural goods as product to sell to compete in this global world. Because Francophone minorities possess bilingual skills and a specific history based on their first arrival and settings, Francophone can sell these for economical value. The two first discourses were helping Francophone minorities to get their rights and to survive as communities, as Francophone who spoke French and came from the same background as a homogeneous group. The globalized discourse is changing the way Francophone minorities define themselves. Bilingualism is more valued, and the question of who is Francophone and who can be part of the “Francophonie” is being asked. These discourses are connected and could emerge from one person voice at one particular moment and change through time and space.

With this paper, I would like to further explore the globalized discourse and how commodity and authenticity are playing an important role for Francophone minorities in two specific settings in Canada.<sup>5</sup> These two sites are very important right now for the Francophone minorities because they are sectors of the economy that provide employment and opportunities for them. In the first part of the paper, I will look at the value of bilingualism in a workplace in Eastern Canada. I will examine how members of a minority use their language skills to access positions in a call centre. This minority used to live in an industrial town where their linguistic skills were not important. In the actual economy<sup>6</sup>, sectors such as a call centre values linguistic skills especially at the hiring level. The French language is seen as something they need to access the workforce. Commodification of language being part of the globalized discourse means that speaking French is a skill that is paid for and evaluated in order to better serve customers. However, Francophone need to be able to speak a certain international standard in order to enter the workplace as bilingual. This minority who lived in an Anglophone context for years possesses its own French varieties that are not considered good enough for the workplace (Roy, 2002). These rules in this economic sector are changing the way Francophone see

<sup>5</sup> Part of this paper was presented at the *International Conference on Bilingualism (ISB4)*, Phoenix, Arizona, April, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> I used to call it “new economy” but how “new” is it? For over twenty years, Americans have talked about how schools should prepare workers to compete in this global world. Corporations had their words to say in these talks (Hinchey, 2004). What is “new” is how minorities are adapting themselves to the economy. With the value of languages, they see an advantage to promote their language and culture.

themselves, their own identity as French Canadian. Being bilingual instead of French Canadians speaking one language and having one culture is more appropriate to satisfy new rules. This example of the workplace provides an overview of how the community is adapting to change. The second part of the paper will examine the tourism industry in Western Canada and will focus more on a legitimate group that decides to focus on business and tourism in order to boost the Francophone economy. I will show how some Franco-Albertans are trying to enter the global market in tourism by promoting services in French and selling vacation packages or excursions to visit different regions, especially where French speaking populations are established. One particular Francophone economic association (*Francophone Economic and Tourism Association*)<sup>7</sup> was established and became the legitimate body that took care (and is still taking care) of the businesses and tourism for the Francophone minority. The organization is promoting historical and “authentic” goods in order to attract tourists from French speaking countries (like France) or Francophone from other provinces (i.e. Québec). They are also trying to sell the added value of the French language to Francophone entrepreneurs; they are promoting to French speaking business people services in French, by telling them that they could add more profit to their organization. From the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* perspective, the linguistic and social reproduction of the Francophone community could gain from providing services in French. However, the globalized discourse and the mandate of the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* does not necessarily include discourse on the reproduction of one specific community as was the case for the other two discourses mentioned earlier. It relates mostly to attracting a specific market for business purposes. *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* uses the globalized discourse in order to serve the interests of members of the community in promoting the use of French in the area and at the same time providing jobs for bilingual people. A challenge that is facing the minority in Alberta and the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* is that not everyone believes that providing services in French only will suffice. Multilingual competencies are needed in some regions, and French is not included in these competencies. In some other areas, they used to do business in English so they don’t see why they have to change. Another point: for the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association*, the tourism industry allows them to boost the use of French. Although because the Francophone community includes people with different varieties (French from France, from Québec, from Alberta), one variety is not privileged over another one in the tourism

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<sup>7</sup> All names have been changed.

industry from the point of view of the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* members. However, from my observations, those who work in the tourism industry seem to possess a variety close to the standard.

Finally, I will argue that two distinct Francophone minorities in Canada (eastern and western) are using their language and culture in order to enter the globalized economical world. One minority has to adapt to globalized standardization for international communication, while the other has to prove that French is a viable market if they want to continue their efforts to attract and keep tourists. For now, some members of the Francophone community are claiming that any variety is adequate as long as one speaks French, although the French language of tourism still remains the standard one.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Language issues in the Canadian context

In Canada, there are two official languages, English and French. It was in 1969, after the Report of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, that the Parliament of Canada adopted the first *Official Languages Act* which recognized English and French as the official languages of all federal institutions in Canada. In 1988, a new *Official Languages Act* come into force with the following: 1) ensure respect for English and French as official languages in Canada; 2) ensure equality of status and equal rights and privileges for their use in all federal institutions and in the Parliament; and 3) support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities. As it is noted by the *Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages*:

September 7, 2004 marks the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coming into effect of the Official Languages Act. Passed in 1969 and amended in 1988, the Act proclaims the equality of status, rights and privileges in the use of English and French in all institutions of the Parliament and the Government of Canada.

<<[http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/archives/fs\\_fi/2004/2004-09-07\\_e.htm](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/archives/fs_fi/2004/2004-09-07_e.htm)>>

There are approximately 1.9 million Canadians that live in official language minority communities. There are 987,690 Francophones outside Québec and 918,955 Anglophones in Québec. For the purpose of this paper, Ontario has 10,531,465 (93.3%) of the population that speak English and 527,710 (4.7%) who speak French. In Alberta, 2,851,958 (97%) of the population speak English and 58,825 (2%) speak French. Francophone in Ontario and Alberta have access to

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<sup>8</sup> See also Heller (2003) and Moïse (2004) for other examples of the tourism industry in Ontario, Canada.

different services and support in French. Both provinces have their Chamber of Commerce, business bureau, Catholic churches with services in French, community services for health, social services and several associations such as leisure groups, sports, libraries, arts and so on. They both have post-secondary institutions designated Francophone.

### **2.1. Schooling in Ontario and Alberta**

One of the main language issues in Canada passed through the education system. A lot of Francophone outside Québec didn't have the opportunities to go to school in French which had an influence on their French, speaking, writing, and their own identity. It is important, then, to look at schooling in Ontario and Alberta for the purpose of this paper. Education in Canada is under provincial jurisdiction. Each province has its own rules and laws regarding minority instruction. For example, before 1969 in Ontario, the provincial government stopped access to French schooling through the vehicle of *Bill 17*, from 1927 to 1944. Even though some Francophone continued their schooling in private colleges, for a long time Francophone in Ontario did not have access to schooling in their mother tongue. This brought challenges in terms of the use and maintenance of the French language. Before 1968, full education in French in Ontario was not available to the French minority, leaving generations of French speakers without access to education in their mother tongue (Welsh, 1988; Heller, 1994). Following the movement for bilingualism at the federal level as mentioned before, schooling in French became available in Ontario. Around 1967, the Ontario provincial government introduced changes in the education of Francophone, allowing curriculum to be delivered wholly in the mother tongue. However, many of the schools remained *mixtes* and were called "bilingual schools". In theory, these schools provided teaching in both languages; however, only a few courses were taught in French, while most were taught in English.

Through the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and its *Article 23*, minorities in Canada could have access to education in their mother tongue. *Article 23* provided and still allows Francophone minorities outside of Québec the right to be educated in their own language in all provinces. The situation today evidences the fierce struggle on the part of Franco-Ontarians to assert their rights and to take back their schools. In 1998, eleven Francophone school boards (7 Catholic and 4 public sectors) controlled and managed all Francophone schools in Ontario. The language of instruction is now French only, even if the students use English or other languages intensively during recess and in talking among themselves (Heller, 1994).

In Alberta, schooling is under the Alberta Act legislature (Julien, 1993). In 1925, a regulation stipulated that where a school board offers a primary French course, all subjects except English may be taught in French in Grades 1 and 2. Beginning in Grade 3, however, French is allowed only one hour per day, although teachers may provide explanations in French when necessary. This regulation remained in effect in the School Act of 1936, 1945 and 1950. In 1968, an amendment of the School Act allowed French to be used as the language of instruction during 50% of the school day from Grade 4 to Grade 12. In 1976, French language instruction underwent major transformation; instruction may now be provided entirely in French. In 1988, the School Act grants parents who qualify under Section 23 of the *Charter* to have their children receive French first language education. In 2000, the governance of Francophone education is structured into four Francophone regions and is operated by Francophone authorities.

### **3. Language, commodity and power**

In the globalized world, service and information economies are dominating. The value of community and authenticity becomes a paradox where the commodification of language and goods are essential (Budach, Roy & Heller, 2003). With the globalized discourse, language and community are challenged. Language becomes a set of “skills” with exchange value in the economy. It does not represent an ethnic dimension of one community. For years, Francophone in Canada were a legitimate ethnic group, being part of the Canadian nation. Francophone and Anglophone lived together trying to get access to different political, economic and social resources. These two groups share a long history of struggle over access to these resources. After 1960, Québec’s political mobilization made possible the development of an ideology of language and state that placed increased value on bilingualism in the country (Heller, 1999). However, notwithstanding their access to employment as bilinguals at the federal level, Francophone minorities outside Québec continued to struggle for rights and services in French, as we have seen with the example of schooling.

In the past, in settings where linguistic minority members lived, bilingualism was a phenomenon that could be observed at the community level, in schools or in the home. Few people could work in French only; they had to know English in order to succeed. More recently, with the emergence of new sectors of communication and technologies, English-French bilingualism is now being valued in workplaces and tourism sectors. Bilingualism is becoming a skill that permits any French-speaking

person and Francophone minority to access the economic, political and social sectors that were not available to them in the past or that only a few had access to (Heller, 1999; Budach, Roy & Heller, 2003), and globalization creates a traditional and authentic market<sup>9</sup> (Le Menestrel, 1999). This market is available to minorities for them to promote their history and their culture. Language and cultural goods are becoming a commodity that one minority group can use for its benefit by accessing and gaining symbolic power and access to resources with their language and culture. Language is seen as a skill to exchange and cultural goods are used as authentic products to attract tourists. That is the globalized discourse produced and lived by the two minorities. Bourdieu (1984) uses the concept of field as a social arena in which people maneuver and struggle over desirable resources. A field is a system of social positions, structured internally in terms of power relationships. For this paper, I will use the characteristics of a field as competitive, strategic, and oriented to external goods, while the characteristics of practice is cooperative, pluralistic and oriented towards internal goods (Warde, 2004). This notion of field and practice will allow me to link the interaction of people in the call center and the tourism industry with the larger economical system lived by the Francophone. The field used by Francophone in order to gain power is dominated by a larger “field of power”. The globalized discourses are produced and emerged from this larger field of power. As Blommaert (2003) pointed out: globalization implies the developments at the core of the world system and have effects at the periphery of that system. As an example, the globalized discourse is adopted by social agencies that contribute to finance Francophone minorities. In 2003, the federal government of Canada saw the importance of bilingualism for Canadians entering the globalized world. The federal government put in place a new plan called *The New Act: New Momentum for Canada’s Linguistic Duality*. The government will spend approximately 350 M (CDN) for minority and second language education and 19 M to support minority communities (Francophone in Canada and Anglophones in Québec), (Government of Canada, 2003). The goal is to promote the linguistic duality of Canadian heritage as being an asset for the future. It is written in an official document (Government of Canada, 2002: 18) that:

At the beginning of this century, in this era of globalization where communications are increasingly important, and where the economy is more and more knowledge and innovation oriented, Canada must build on its linguistic duality and the international nature of its two official languages

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<sup>9</sup> Traditional and authentic market means that one group will use a specific product to sell as a marker of their group.

more than ever. That gives it a substantial competitive edge. Access to two of the most vital international languages is an asset for labour markets and enhances mobility of individuals. That is why Canada's Innovative Strategy makes the ability to communicate in English and French one of the foundations for lifelong learning for children and youth.

For all levels of government, languages are seen as a key to success for the future generation. Languages are sets of skills that everyone should possess to enter the globalized world. The Francophone minorities have to position themselves in this bigger field of power in order to gain power and resources and re-examine themselves in order to have a place in the new world.

#### **4. Critical sociolinguistic and ethnographic work**

The first part of the paper relates to a sociolinguistic and ethnographic work that I conducted from 1998 to 2001 in a call centre in Southern Ontario.<sup>10</sup> I conducted 80 interviews in a call centre and observed the workplace for 4 months. I also looked at internal and external documents that could help me to understand the workplace. In the study, I looked at the employee's linguistic repertoires and their training and work. I examined linguistic practices to better understand who used which varieties of French with whom, when, and for what purposes? I also studied who gave value to which linguistic varieties in French and what were the consequences for the Francophone minority in the workplace. The specific objective of this research was to look at how, through discourses, employers give a value to language practices and for what goals. I went further and looked at who was hired, who was not, and for what reasons.

The research in the second part of the paper was conducted in 2001-2003 called *Alberta Francophonie and the new globalized economy*, funded by the University of Calgary. I interviewed key people from the Francophone community and from the tourism industry (Francophone and Anglophone) in order to understand the changes

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<sup>10</sup> This project was the basis of my PhD dissertation; see Roy (2002). My work was part of a bigger project called "Prise de Parole". This project was financed by the Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada (principal investigators: Normand Labrie, Monica Heller, University of Toronto, and Jürgen Erfurt, Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main; collaborators: Annette Boudreau and Lise Dubois, University of Moncton). It was also financed by the program Transcoop from the German-American Academic Council Foundation (principal investigators: Jürgen Erfurt, Monica Heller and Normand Labrie) and AUPELF-UREF (principal investigator: Claudine Moïse, Université d'Avignon et des Pays de Vaucluse, France).

lived by Franco-Albertans. I also participated in the community in order to better understand it (community lunches and activities). I also read any documentation provided by the community to understand how it is living today and promoting its own people. With my data, I describe, interpret and explain how people live and make sense of their world by looking at discursive and social practices (Heller, 2002 for an overview of critical sociolinguistics). I use a discourse analysis framework that allows me to understand how people construct their reality through talk and interaction (Gee, 1999). I also understand how discourses do not only explain domination and power relations, but how it is through discourses that one reaches power and is empowered (Foucault, 1971). It is by using contextualisation cues (Gumperz, 1982, 1999) that speakers negotiate their way through interaction, make situated inferences of what is happening and work out their roles in and through discourse (Martin-Jones, 1998). Discourse analysis allows me to understand who says what for what consequences in their own reality.

### **5. Research in the call centre**

In the 1920s and 1940s, Francophone –either from Québec, northern Ontario, or New Brunswick– and other immigrants (e.g., Ukrainians, Poles, Italians) came in two waves to a small town in southern Ontario whose population was previously primarily English speaking. They came looking for work opportunities and sought to establish themselves in this region’s steel, textile, and power plants. Around 1940, 1,015 Francophone (there were about 3,000 in 1946)<sup>11</sup> organized and created Francophone groups around the Church, consolidating a French neighbourhood that became known as “Frenchtown”. For years, Francophone worked in different industries and were part of community life. In 2004, Francophone still constitute between 10% and 15% of the population of this small town.<sup>12</sup>

Between 1975 and 1990, the industrial economy linked with this community life, notably the textile and metallurgy industries underwent a radical shift; they went under. The collapse of the economy left the Francophone population with various choices. Some moved away; some tried to make it on their own by starting a small business (corner stores, construction); others turned to the Anglophone majority for

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<sup>11</sup> The statistics come from “Historical and Architectural Reflections of the Founding Peoples of [the city], Ontario”, a document published in 1992 by the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee of [the city].

<sup>12</sup> For the Statistical Profile of Canadian communities, see the following website: <<[http://www.statcan.ca:80/start\\_f.html](http://www.statcan.ca:80/start_f.html)>>

opportunities. These conditions opened the door for some Francophone to assimilate to the English language and way of life, a phenomenon which represented a threat for the survival of the Francophone community.

At the end of the 1980s, after the economy had remained stagnant for ten years, the French language again became valuable in the new service-oriented sectors such as call center and the tourism industry. This was a change which represented a vehicle for survival for the Francophone community. In order to access the global marketplace, the council of this industrial town initiated the installation of fiber optics to strengthen its communication infrastructure. Being well-positioned geographically and strategically, and with a bilingual, even multilingual, population, they were in a position to attract new businesses to the region. The publicity that they did appeared to have a positive effect, as many call centre businesses came to establish themselves in the region. These call centres expanded rapidly, and one in particular became a large and important employer in the region. This centre was the setting for my study.

The call centre is a financial institution where telephone representatives provide services to customers who have credit cards from different companies, such as retail outlets. The centre represents both an inbound and outbound workplace where customers call for information about their accounts and payments, and employees call customers in order to remind them of their overdue accounts. The call centre also provides road assistance services where customers phone a telephone representative in an emergency and the centre arranges for the appropriate service, such as towing.

Call centres are seen by many community members as crucial for the stability of the community, its growth and, most importantly, for its future. After being afraid of the English assimilation of their younger generation, most of whom do not participate in French community associations; the older generation sees the emergence of call centres as a gold mine for their future. We can see that in the next quotations, taken from interviews a colleague and I conducted with three women of the older generation (G: Georgette, A: Alice, participants; J: Jürgen, interviewer):

### Excerpt 1<sup>13</sup>

G: y en a beaucoup de fermetures d'usines

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<sup>13</sup> Transcription conventions:

(...) section omitted	[c'est]	word inserted for clarification
/ pause	[rire]	paralinguistic phenomenon
(sacra?) word unclear	– y a –	overlap
(x) unintelligible	– comment –.	

- A: y'en a plusieurs manufactures de fermées alors nos jeunes faut qu'i' aillent ailleurs alors euh parfois je vois [la ville] venir comme une place de retirés
- J: ben de personnes on l'a déjà dit mais euh avec les *call centres* qui ouvrent on devrait avoir une belle génération au moins de femmes
- A: si au moins de femmes
- J: même y a des jeunes hommes qui vont travailler là parce qu'ils ont l'informatique là qui est très bon
- A: ça fait que
- J: i' l'ont eux autres
- [G: there are lots of plant closings
- A: there are lots of plants that are closed so our young people have to go elsewhere so uh sometimes I see [the city] becoming like a place for retired people
- J: lots of people already said that but with the call centres that are opening we should have a good generation at least of women
- A: yes at least of women
- J: there are even young men who go work there because they have the computing which is very good
- A: *so*
- J: they have that] (my translation)

This quotation sheds light on the closing of the old economy to the opening of the actual economy in the city. Because Francophone are getting older, these two women see a change with the call centers. Call centres are seen by the older members as a key for the survival of a “generation” of Francophones, “at least” for women and youth. A sentence like “they have that” stipulates that at least they have the call center to rely on to practice their French. Indeed, in the community, bilingualism is generally seen as a valuable resource for entering new service-oriented sectors. From my observations, Anglophones and Francophones believe that if you possess bilingual or multilingual skills, it is possible to get a job right away. It is not clear to what extent this is true. But in any case, even if it were, the reality of the job situation does not reflect the expectations of the older members of the community. The call center that I examined in this paper does not value cultural or social dimensions of Francophone identity; the traditional and modern discourses are absent from the workplace. Instead, the workplace focus on inter-company competition entails paying attention to achieving customer loyalty. The call center is part of the powerful corporation enterprise discourse (the bigger field of power). Language is seen as an instrument to achieve corporation goals. For example, in order to be more competitive on the global market, the upper management of the call centre decided in 1998 to focus attention on recruiting “good” bilingual people and

on improving the way employees (both Anglophones and Francophones) talk to the customers. Language is now seen as a commodity (for example, people get paid specific amounts for being able to speak French) and is used for specific reasons: to be professional and flexible in order to attract and keep customers in a competitive globalized economy. Most of the time, the use of different language varieties is not an issue in the call center, as languages (English and French) are now standardized and paid for. In the next excerpt, a vice-president who is unilingual in English mentions that language is being remunerated and that they are setting standards around communicative skills.

### **Excerpt 2**

S: like people speak different kinds of French so how you will deal with this? Is there like a need for some specific variety?

J: yeah I probably couldn't comment on that as much as I I (X) to MP.

S: hm hm

J: I do know that because we are now paying for it we are setting standards for the French, for both English and French language skill and requirement, setting standards so careful about slang and ensuring that we're conversing with customers in a way that is appealing to them.

In this excerpt, the vice-president mentioned that language skills are standardized and paid for. It is clear that language varieties are not welcome: "so careful about slang" even if she doesn't want to comment on it. In the past, language skills weren't paid for. But with "setting standards" or "English and French language skill", one can notice that this is the language of the workplace. For the vice-president and most of the employees, the goal of standardization is to appeal to customers in order to attract their business. From my point of view and from a business perspective, it is a way to evaluate and get accountability from employees. As Cameron mentioned (2000: 57):

The rapid diffusion and intensification of linguistic control strategies (...) has occurred for two interrelated reasons. One is technological change (...) and the other is the increasing influence of new management approaches. The overall effect of these developments has been to place not just linguistic behaviour but many other kinds of on-the-job behaviour under much closer scrutiny and surveillance.

With these rules in the workplace regarding languages, some of the members of the Francophone community were seen as not speaking good enough French in order to work as bilingual representatives in the call centre. Some members were marginalized because their bilingualism was not good enough for the employer. An Anglophone manager noted,

### **Excerpt 3**

M: To get the bilingual calls through some recent contract hiring that was done, we have assessed people's bilingual language skills, verbal language skills, and some people who have said they were bilingual have not met our STANDARDS.

The term "standard" is mentioned often during interviews. Linguistic standard means to be able to articulate well, to use full sentences and to have the appropriate tone when talking to customers. Employees or new candidates can not use "slang" in both languages. During the hiring process, some bilinguals from the community are eliminated because of their lack of language competencies in French. Employees in the workplace also have to face the standardization. When I was there, and since the standardization of communication, two employees were invited to work only as unilingual (English) representatives because their French skills were not good enough to talk to the customers. Some bilingual employees would also choose not to work as bilingual telephone representatives because they did not feel comfortable enough. In the past, a lot of employees told me that they struggled on the phone at the beginning of their career as telephone representatives, but it was how they learned French again after not speaking it for a few years.

In the workplace, the challenge of the minority facing the language's commodification is that some of their members are excluded from the workplace as bilingual representatives because they do not possess the right linguistic norms. The norms consist of being able to speak both languages in a monolingual form (Dabène, 1994; Roy, 2003). As a human resource person said, "but you have to make sure that these people can communicate well, even in both languages. Not just one, not just in French or just English!". The norm is also being able to articulate well and not using slang. As we mentioned before, the Francophone community has its own varieties that included a lot of code-switching and use of English. Francophones don't possess the appropriate linguistic skills for the workplace. The reproduction of the traditional community is then being compromised by new rules in the workplace. Only those who possess the appropriate skills in French and English will be part of the community of bilinguals and will satisfy the globalized market from the call centre's point of view.

## **6. The tourism industry**

For a long time Alberta was a province where languages were not valued at the school level or in the workplace. Exceptions were made for workplaces that were under federal law and had to provide services in both languages. At the same time, it was not mandatory for children in school to learn a second language. There were

immersion schools and Francophone schools available, but it did not seem important for the provincial government to promote minority and second language learning. As noted earlier, this is changing now at both the federal and provincial level of government. Languages seem to be valued in order to enter the global economy from the government perspective. For its part, the tourism industry has always been a major business in Alberta, especially with the Rocky Mountains. Languages have always been important for the industry because of the tourists from around the world who visit the Rockies. In fact, tourism is the third largest industry employing around 100,000 Albertans (<<<http://www.alberta-canada.com/statpub/tourstat.cfm>>>). Over 28,000 person years of employment were attributable to visitors' expenditures in the three National Parks (Banff, Jasper & Waterton). In 2000, Japan was the major overseas visitor market. However, since the global events and money devaluation of some countries, tourism associations in Alberta have had to focus on the local markets such as their own people (Albertans), other tourists from Canadian provinces, and American tourists from the border States. Because of the government initiatives and financial support, the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* is trying to attract tourists that speak French (Québécois, other Francophone minorities in other provinces, and Francophone from France or Belgium). This is a challenge in a province that still sees its people as English speakers most of all, especially in the tourism industry.

In this section of the paper, I examine the tourism industry and the value of languages in that industry in order to better understand how a Francophone minority is entering the global world. The fact that the tourism industry has always needed language skills to serve their customers, Francophone seem to find a place in that industry. For stakeholders, providing money for tourism (either in French or in English) promotes the economy of the province. It is not for the cultural and ethnic aspects of one specific group. This excerpt comes from an Anglophone member of a federal organisation that provides funding for the development of Western Canada:

### **Excerpt 1**

D: Yes, because we're looking at it from the economic perspective. It's not just cultural tourism although that's certainly one of the focuses of it. The fact is, it increases tourism and brings Francophone out here. It strengthens communities and helps sustain and develop, so from our perspective it contributes to sustain the development of these communities, so we see it as truly economic more than just (...)

This excerpt allows us to understand that stakeholders provide money for tourism from an economic perspective. Sentences like "it's not just cultural tourism"

and “it contributes to sustain the development of these communities”, demonstrate that the goal for giving the communities money, is purely economic even if “it strengthens communities” as the Francophone one. This federal organization has its own mandate for the economic development of the west. The Francophone minority has taken advantage of the money provided by the federal government. With the funding received from two federal organizations, some members of the Francophone minority (mainly those who are responsible for the minority in a group called ACFA (*Association Canadienne Française de l’Alberta*) has tried to find a niche for the promotion of French and to attract Francophone tourists to the province. Around 1998, some members of the Francophone minority established a group called *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* that focuses on economic development for Francophone in the province. Their main goal is to promote entrepreneurship for businesses that provide services in French. One of their mandates is to focus on the tourist sector. This association became the legitimate group that is taking care of the economical and tourist sectors of the francophone minority. The *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association*, for the first time in Alberta, produced in 2000 a tourist guide in French for French-speaking tourists. One of the first initiatives of the association is to become more visible to promote French tours. What the group did is to go around the province to find partners that will publicize their businesses. Owners of these businesses are either Francophone or French-speaking people or people who could provide services in French. The tourist guide contains all kinds of information about the province in French, and about sites where tourists could be receiving services in French. It also provides circuits in different regions with historical sites to visit or farms with “authentic” products. Some are owned by Francophone, some not. The *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* is also trying to work collaboratively with the provincial tourism association. The *Association* has a seat at their table in order to talk about the future of tourism of the province. However, they have difficulties in convincing the provincial association of the importance of the French or Francophone markets in Canada and elsewhere. For one member of a provincial tourism association, language is not a major issue when it is time for Québécois (people from Québec, a province with a French language majority) to consider traveling in Alberta. This member has a long history of working with markets from Europe and Eastern Canada. He also lived in Montreal for more than 20 years and speaks five languages.

### **Excerpt 2**

K: Now relating it to language and I think that’s your main concern. I do not believe that language is a major issue, and I say this is my personal view. I cannot

substantiate it with research. I have no evidence that language is a hindrance for Québécois to visit it is... I think Québécois anticipate or are prepared that when they get out of Québec and travel within Canada, that people speak English and I don't think... it's not an emotional issue it's just a logic issue. In my opinion, would they prefer to speak French? Of course they would, so would the English who go to Québec; they want to speak English. Some [members of the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association*] have done a great job in identifying an infrastructure in the... Alberta tourism infrastructure which provides French services and [*Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* members] hence for their members they go to all promotions in Québec and also in France and they are more than eager to get into a partnership with them which we are considering, but we have certain restrictions which we have to be careful with. We have limited resources and our strategic tourism marketing council which writes our strategies tells us or agrees with us what is our primary market, secondary and third markets. France, at this moment, is a secondary market. Also a combination between activities in France and Québec are not the same. You cannot do the same thing in Québec as you've been doing in Paris or France; you need a total different approach to the market. So once the language is quasi the same however, the cost is different to develop material for France and different to develop material for Québec. Just to say they both speak French, it isn't the same and I think you have to be cognizant of that so the cost factor then becomes a different one in both markets or in one of them (...) and I'm not saying it's not an added benefit to have that service [French service] it is an important thing but I don't think it's a deciding... the sole deciding factor.

This member of the tourism sector in Alberta mentioned interesting points in the above excerpt. For him, language is not an issue for Québécois to visit Alberta. He explains how the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* works hard to promote French in Alberta. However, in his opinion, cost is very important when one wants to attract a specific market. France and Québec markets are totally different in terms of cost. Terms such as “market”, “cost”, “strategic marketing” show economical terms that are part of the globalized discourse. Languages are seen important only for economical purposes. This member also said to us that Francophones are too emotional. My understanding of his comment is that Francophones and Anglophones have a long history of struggles in the past. Francophone minorities in Canada often play the card of one of the legitimate groups in Canada to gain access to funding or rights (see traditional and modern discourses). But from an economic point of view and as the member of the provincial association mentioned, any group could receive funding if they provided evidence of collaboration between businesses, money to contribute and success at the end. He continues with:

K: But if a Chinese community would come to me and say look how many Chinese there are in China then it comes with the same issue and we'd say wait a minute. So lets do nothing and everybody goes in a circle. That's not what drives the market, so just because you know there are Québécois who want to come here then you take the total number in context to how you measure the successes but if you have limited money (...)

The tourism industry is driven by how much money one puts into the industry and gets in return. Even a member of the tourism industry who speaks several languages argues that it is only the economic value of a market that will drive the tourism industry. For this specific situation, where Francophone try to get to the France and Québec markets, they are meeting strong arguments against their work. If they do not have money to support their initiative, the provincial tourism association will not collaborate with them to attract this market. However, as we speak, research is being conducted in Québec to see if the market could be viable from Alberta's tourism perspective. Despite the fact that Francophone have to struggle at the provincial level in the tourism industry, the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* is working hard in Northern Alberta to promote the history and products of the North in French for Francophone.

### 6.1. North of Alberta

Specifically in the north of the province, the ACFA regional in collaboration with the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* focuses on a more traditional aspect of Francophone life and past. They are offering cultural and historical products that one can see now (apiculture) or from the past (genealogy). They are also focusing on historical sites such as a mission where members of a Catholic congregation established themselves. One comment from the general manager of the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* explains how important history is for the promotion of the province: “mais quand tu arrives en Alberta y'a beaucoup d'histoire à offrir” (“but when you arrive in Alberta there is a lot of history to offer”). Also, in the north where the French population is denser, for years Francophone spoke French. Business, however, was conducted in English in order to serve the whole population. With the promotion of French in the north, businesses could benefit, as mentioned in the next example:

#### Excerpt 3

F: y'a des entreprises ça fait au moins 20 ans qu'y sont là c'est des Francophones qui les gèrent Grande Prairie de l'autre côté c'est la même chose y'a beaucoup de Francophone depuis 20-25 ans y'sont toujours fonctionné en anglais parce que

c'est la langue de la majorité et puis y'avait vraiment pas d'incitatif pour travailler en français alors nous ce qu'on véhicule comme philosophie c'est la valeur rajoutée alors si tu parles le français pis tu t'affiches tu peux augmenter ton chiffre d'affaire de peut-être 5%-10% pis c'est de l'argent que t'aurait peut-être pas eu autrement parce que tu vas avoir des clients, des consommateurs qui vont vouloir se faire servir en français pis si tu offres ce service là pis tu l'dis pis y l'voient y'a des grosses chances qu'y l'achètent.

[F: There are enterprises that have existed for 20 years and are owned by Francophone. Grande Prairie, on the other hand is the same thing. There are a lot of Francophone who for 20-25 years have always functioned in English because it is the majority language and there wasn't any encouragement to work in French. Then we supported the philosophy of the added value that if you speak French and you announce it as is you can increase your revenue by maybe 5%-10% and this is money that you wouldn't have otherwise because you will have customers/consumers who will want to be served in French and if you are offering this service and you promote it, there is a strong chance that they will buy it.]

French services are promoted as an added value for businesses that can use them for their purposes. In this excerpt, words such as “added value, revenue, service” demonstrate how the globalized discourse is used to promote French language by the legitimate group. However, there is a lot of resistance from businesses that do not see the relevance of providing services in French. The population speaks mostly English; even Francophone are bilinguals and speak English. Providing services in French works for those who are already convinced of the necessity to do so from a community perspective. Most of the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* employees who are promoting services in French are from outside Alberta (either from Québec or New Brunswick) or legitimate speakers who work for associations for years. Some established themselves lately and believe that Francophone should provide services in French. Some of the businesses that I visited are happy to put a sticker mentioning that they have services in French, but business is as usual (in English mostly or in French with older members of the community). Few groups came to visit them and wanted to speak French.

Despite the fact that the north promotes historical sites, the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* also tries to promote “authentic” products in order to attract tourism. Although products are interesting, language is not necessarily needed or available in different sites. The paradoxes that are facing the Francophone in the north are as follows. They want to promote services in French to boost business, but everyone is able to speak English in the region. Services in

French will be indispensable for tourists from outside of the province such as Québec or France. How often will these tourists come to visit a farm or historical site? We observed that one specific historical site (a religious site) had as visitors mostly pupils from schools or the elderly who lived in the site years ago. Tourists were just starting to come along. Another important remark concerns the “authenticity” of the products. In the example of the ostrich farm, we see that “authenticity” is not related to language even if it is related to the Francophone community. One could sell an authentic product of the region without offering French at the same time. The owner is Francophone but when we did the tour, it was in English.

In sum, in the north of Alberta, the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* tries to promote French in the tourism industry for the following reasons: 1) they want businesses in the north to promote French in order to attract tourists and make more money; 2) they want to offer different products or attractions to tourists. For example, they could chose to visit historical sites or to visit a farm offering products of the region. The first is related to Francophone history and living; the second refers to authentic products of the region without being part of the French history or way of living. The question to be raised is as follows: how will services in French attract more tourists interested in Francophone history and products from the region? French is an added value for the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* and they try to enter the global world with it. It is interesting to notice that legitimate groups and people that are working for the tourism industry in the North of Alberta come from another province or from an organization that wishes to promote business and economical value of the French. Little is made to look at how the community is reacting from their drive. They then face resistance from the community. As we mentioned earlier, there are paradox issues between community and authenticity and commodification of language and goods when the latter are privileged.

## **6.2. The Rocky Mountains**

In the Rockies, the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* also tries to put people together in order to find and promote businesses that could offer French services. However, the region has a long history of multilingualism. For years, tourists from Asian countries, Eastern Europe and Australia visited the region for its mountains, its sport and the natural environment. One specific group from the Anglophone majority promotes tourism in the region. The group is called *Heritage Association* and promotes the natural resources of the Rockies Mountains and the

environment. Their “authenticity” relates to the beauty of the place, its history, and its preserved environment. As a member of the Heritage group said,

#### **Excerpt 4**

S: So when you say “heritage” it’s not only the environment but it’s the past.

A: Yes, so heritage is much more so about the past... well no that’s not true. Protecting the environment of our past is essential because it is our environment, our natural pristine, protected, unspoiled natural beauty and environment that is also a heritage tourism product that people come here for because it’s natural and beautiful and that’s why they’ve come here for 100 years.

Heritage means protecting the past. That past means the natural environment of the Rockies. *The Heritage Association* tries to educate everyone working in tourism businesses of the importance of keeping the forest clean and safe so its natural beauty stays like it is. Again, the globalized discourse talks about “environment, natural, 100 years” which are considered “authentic products” from the mountains. However, the *Heritage Association* does not see the importance of promoting French in the region. It would rather promote German or Japanese for tourists visiting the country.

#### **Excerpt 5**

A: If I think about it, Heritage Tourism in a place like Québec or St. Paul [north of Alberta] where language is the heritage, absolutely then it’s a Heritage Tourism product that if I went to Québec City or to Montreal, part of what I’m going to see is your culture that’s embedded in your language and your history and your past because it’s interesting and that’s why I go there. Because this region doesn’t have a base in French language it’s not part of the Heritage Tourism product here, but if St. Paul, for example, had a cultural center or a festival in the summer they would probably incorporate something with the French heritage into their celebration. In the Banff area it might be the Swiss that would be a key part of our heritage or the Bostonians, because the people who came here at the turn of the century or 20 years prior to that were Americans coming from Boston. If we look at the Whites –Peter and Catherine White or the Vox family that did all the measuring of the glaciers and that’s where the White Museum exhibit is right now– they were from Boston. Peter and Catherine White were from somewhere in the Eastern States. I’m not exactly sure about that, but they weren’t from here and a lot of the guides that came to guide people who were mostly Americans or Europeans safely through the mountains, they were all Swiss, so the Swiss guides stayed here over the winter and brought their families and opened restaurants and so you don’t find many French restaurants here. However, you find a lot of German restaurants here or Swiss Italian and a lot of influence that way but

there's only one French restaurant in town owned by the Schwartz's... or used to be owned by the Schwartz's who were Swiss.

In this excerpt, we have a great example of what “authentic products” means in the globalized discourse. Heritage Tourism means “culture that's embedded in your language and your history and your past because it's interesting”. You can sell your culture and language. The person states that if you go to a Francophone area (like St. Paul) you could offer tourists a summer festival with the Francophone heritage. But in the mountains, that heritage is not Francophone but multilingual. This is why they will rather offer a product from that heritage. The need for French services is quite limited. Although there are a number of youngsters from Québec who come every year to work in the Rockies, very few people ask for French services in the region. The youngsters obtain jobs in hotels, in ski resorts or in restaurants. They mostly come to Western Canada to work, to learn English and to leave home. These Francophone mentioned to us that they do not use French that often. A member of the tourism association of the Rockies told us that tourism business is more and more in English, but customers like to be able to hear and speak their language when they visit a place. He mentioned a group of Taiwanese that come to Banff, go to Las Vegas and go back home. They have one week to do so. When travelers are traveling far and in a short period of time, they like to have a rich experience. Often that experience comes by being able to speak in their own language.

Multilingualism is more important than being French or speaking French in the Rockies. However, because the Rockies have three National Parks under federal jurisdiction, most of the literature in the National Parks is in English and French. The Heritage group can then ask for help from the National Parks if they need French speaking information and staff.

The Alberta context is very complex. In the north, Francophone established themselves a long time ago. The *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* who have voices at the government level and financial support, try to promote the Francophone heritage by providing visits to sites from their past and try to sell “authentic products”. In the Rockies, Francophone are still trying to promote their language among other languages. How do *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* responsible for tourism in the province deal with the difference? It seems that the *Association* is promoting any variety of French as long as one speaks it in their tourism initiative. For now, everyone that speaks French is welcome. Tourist activities will permit it to grow services in the other official language (French). Some Francophones from the North are reserved about the new tourism initiative. Others see an opportunity to offer jobs in French to youngsters.

## 7. Conclusion

The globalized discourse puts emphasis on the commodification of language and value on local and authentic products. In this paper, I demonstrated how two Francophone minority groups are living the globalized discourse in their own context. In the call centre, Francophone have to be able to speak well enough to be considered bilinguals. They have to be able to use a standardized way of speaking in order to receive money for their work. In the tourism industry, language is seen important by the *Francophone Economic and Tourism Association* to attracting tourism. In the north of Alberta, where there is a Francophone population, French is being promoted. At this time, every variety seems to be welcomed as long as one offers French services to tourists. However, the globalized discourse which sees an economical value of the language meets resistance from the community which is bilingual and from the tourism association in the province. In the Rockies, it is multilingualism that is promoted. Authentic and local products are also a way to attract tourists. All these initiatives from the communities are being driven by initiatives at the government level and at the corporate level of the workplace. It is the corporate workplace that makes rules for skills that will be recognized as essential to reaching the market. Communication skills are important in this global world, and workplaces of the new economy are driving the changes. The government also participates in promoting the linguistic and cultural goods of the new economy. It offers money to communities in order to better develop a niche to produce more money. As the globalized discourse predominates our world, minority communities are adapting to it the best they can. Francophone are using different strategies to attain the bigger field of power which is to enter the global economy. They use their language skills and cultural goods to achieve these goals. However, in practice, their language is devalued for a more standard French (call centre and probably in the tourism industry) and some don't see the importance to disturb the community life which conducted their business in English for years (in Northern Alberta). Francophone and francophone associations are learning how to play the games of the globalized discourse without loosing too much after years of achievement as Francophone minorities in Canada. For them, the battle continues in order to access economical, social and political resources but under different rules.

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