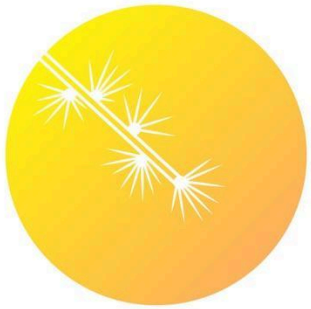

Language and Race in Contemporary Canadian History Project

Interview Transcript

Interviewee:	Manuela Marujo
Interviewers:	Jeff Bale & Mayo Kawaguchi
Date:	May 25, 2023
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Educator's Early Life: From Portugal to Canada

Mayo 01:51
Reading your PhD thesis, we learned that your first visit to Canada was 1981 and you were a representative of Portuguese Ministry. So, I was wondering if you could tell us a bit more about how you came to work in the Ministry in Portugal.

Manuela Marujo 02:25
So, Portugal is a country of emigrants. We have a long history of leaving the country. We have as a matter of fact, 5 million people outside and we have 10 million. So, it's— (laughs). And so, we are 15 million, but 5 million are outside. And so, there's always—the people who left they start leaving to Brazil, that was the first big migration process. And then Europe, of course, France, in the 60s was a big attraction for Portuguese emigrants. And then, you know, Europe, Germany, etc. And Canada only came in the 50s. We just celebrated last week, the 13th of May 1953 was the official date of Portuguese immigration to Canada. And so, it's a new thing. And in my thesis, I tell the story. I had heard about immigration, but no one in Portugal cares, or cared to study it very deeply. And it was an opportunity that I had of going to Sweden, teaching Portuguese as a foreign language. I went there three times. And in one of the times, I remembered someone I had met when I was a child that was in Sweden. And I made a point of trying to find this couple because it was something in my childhood, and I was very well impressed because she was an elementary school teacher, and she was teaching Portuguese in Sweden, in Stockholm. And the Sweden government in those days had the very attractive program. So, the teacher would go to a certain school to teach one child or two children or three children, because there were not many—of course—Portuguese immigrants in Sweden, but they made sure that every child had the opportunity of learning, continuing to learn and continuing to study their mother language. I didn't know about that. It was not familiar in Portugal. No one spoke about it. So, it was really my first awareness of how a child that travels without their consent, as parents take them, could continue to learn the language in a school environment.

So, after I came [back] from Sweden, I started kind of asking questions—because I was already teaching Portuguese as a foreign language to foreigners, so I had invitation from one of my professors at the university. And I was doing that during the summer teaching, summer courses for foreigners from all over the world, that for different reasons wanted to learn Portuguese. And I said, What about the Portuguese? How are they doing in other countries? So that question started there. And then I realized there were programs in France especially, because France attracted—like Paris, was the second largest Portuguese population after Lisbon. And because there were so many immigrants from Portuguese background, the French government start looking at what do we do with all these kids, right? So, they had a protocol with the Portuguese government, and they start sending teachers from Portugal to support these kids. And later on, of course, there's a lot of documentation in France about that, they started teaching Portuguese, in elementary schools and secondary schools with the continuation of so many numbers. At a certain point, we had 2 million Portuguese in Paris. It was a large—yep. Paris has a long history of immigration, because it's so close, people almost walked the borders. They were illegal. So, there's a lot of things. So, I started looking at that, France, and then, you know, England, and then Germany, etc. And I said, ah, this is a very interesting topic, there's not much about it.

And literally, as I said, I walk into the department of—it was called the Teaching of Elementary and Secondary School Abroad, [which is the] department that took care of that. I went in, young—today, you know, I couldn't do that. I said, "I'd like to work here." (laughs) The person I spoke to says, "who are

you?" (laughs) I said "I've been working in this foreign language, I had a little bit of experience. But what I would like to do was to teach or to do training to do something relating with Portuguese kids, immigrant kids." And the person that [I] spoke with was like, "Well, maybe she can do something I don't know." And she said, "Do you have any experience in publishing a magazine?" I said, "No, but I can learn." She said "Okay, there is this opportunity. We have someone working in a magazine, that would kind of be a creative way of kids all over the world to know about Portugal, Portuguese activities." I said, "Oh, yeah, sure, I can do that." So, I did that. That's why they hired me and I published—I think it was two issues. Because then the money—to send the magazines abroad was an issue, to distribute this kind of thing. So, I did that, which was kind of interesting. I learned on the on the spot how to do that. And then—but I stayed. And what I started doing was going to Germany and England, to speak with the teachers to tell them, my experience was teaching Portuguese as a foreign language, not as a first language. And these kids that were there, they really were learning Portuguese as more as a foreign language. I felt at ease to give the instructor some ideas of what I was doing. Because we were all learning, it was a very new thing talking this in the 80s, 70s and 80s. So I did that, and in one of my teaching training trips, it happened to be Canada.

And in Canada in those days was *amazing*. The language awareness was—because it was immediately after Trudeau—so I came in 81, right? So, when I came to Canada, I came specifically to visit Portuguese community schools. So, where parents and activists etc., were providing Portuguese classes. And they really had the numbers in those days in the 70s. There were lots of classes, lots of schools, lots of private entrepreneurship, people open the school here, school there. But I was told, and my goal was to speak with the Boards, and to see what the Board was doing, the Toronto Board of Education, especially the Catholic Board of Education, because most Portuguese children are Catholic, [their] parents are Catholic. And I was impressed with the welcoming, especially the Toronto Board of Education, they welcomed me. I had meetings with the director at the AGO and—they really made an effort to have a dialogue with someone from Portugal. I was—in those days—I was a teacher trainer, but that's my voice, Portuguese voice, right? So, and I had the support of the postulate that took me to Chatham to Windsor, London, where there were schools, and I met lots of people. And I was really, very well impressed with the enthusiasm that they were showing to provide the kids with the best Portuguese teaching that they could. And I went back, so full of enthusiasm, and I wanted to report to my director [in Portugual]. No one was interested. No one heard my reports. I said, "Would you like to have a meeting?" "Oh, no, no." So that showed—in those days—the lack of dialogue between the two governments.

Later, I said, "Why aren't people interested in this? So much potential." And I decided to do a little bit more in this area. So, I got from the government where I was—this job in London, England, as a coordinator of Portuguese in England. So, I went there. And then to learn a little bit more comparing what was England doing compared to Canada. And, of course, there were a lot of Portuguese kids in the elementary school system in Britain already in those days. So, there were classes, they were doing something. I met with teacher trainers, and my job was more to—Portugal was paying for Portuguese elementary school teachers to teach in Britain. So, there was a protocol with Britain and Portugal. Britain would give—like they did here in Canada, the classrooms free. So, they provided the setting for the classes, they wouldn't pay for the teachers. So, the Portuguese government paid, as they did with France, and with Germany. So, there were some rules, Portugal would provide the teachers, and the countries would provide the settings free, etc. So that was an interesting project. But I didn't like to work for the foreign affairs. So, I was hired in a kind of protocol between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was working at the Portuguese Consulate. And they didn't have the same ideas that we have about education.

They [the Portuguese Consulate] just wanted me to open a school, bring a teacher and they didn't care if the school had 15 kids one of each level. And I had to deal with the teacher telling me, "how do you

teach this kid? I don't know how.” And I said, “I don't know how either.” And I went to the consulate, because the consul was my direct boss, and they said, “I don't care. That's your problem. Parents want the class, you open a class.” And I started having issues. I said, “No, I don't want to do this.” Because this is not what I learned in pedagogy. I couldn't—the teachers were starting to get really upset with so many schools opening, many classes, not schools, in the church in I remember in Ascot (laughs), I remember because of the queen’s thing. So, in Ascot, they had the school with 15 kids: one three-year-old, one five-year-old, [and] one 15-year-old. How can you do that? So, after my term—because I went temporarily for these three months, just preparing the school year, etc. I said, “I don’t want to do. This is not for me. I’d like to teach but not this.” So, I left but I already had applied to come to Canada. But in the meantime, I said maybe I should do a little bit more of studies on this, be a little more knowledgeable of the impact of second language learning by the time.

So, before I was hired by U of T, I had another opportunity of coming to Canada as a visitor. And I went to university [and] spoke with a few people. And there was someone teaching Portuguese there, then I said, “How did you get there hired?” She said, “Oh, I worked for the Portuguese government.” Because the Portuguese government had a lecture[ship] in those days paid by the Portuguese government to teach at university. I said, “When do you finish your term?” She said, “Oh, in a year.” “OK, I'll come and substitute you” because it was—you couldn't pursue—was a short contract. The girl—I didn't know her, she said, “Are you really interested in coming?” I said, "Yeah, I want to come and study here. I think it's a great opportunity.” So very soon, like a month or two later, she sent me an ad that U of T had posted, looking for an instructor, Portuguese instructor. And she said, “Well, if you're really interested, Canada is looking.” But of course, Canada was looking for a Canadian, naturally. I applied, why not? I mean—So I applied, and for my surprise, that summer, someone went to Portugal to interview me. And she said, “We are interested in your profile.” I said, “Okay.” It took me three years to get here, with the bureaucracy, I had the job in Portugal. So, I wasn't like waiting for the Canadian government to accept me. But they had to wait one year, until a [Canadian] national applied, there was no one that they liked. So, then the university hired me, that the contract, the visas—so it took me a while to arrive here. And when I came, of course, I came to teach at U of T, but always with the goal of learning more about the situations in secondary school. So, I was lucky enough to have a daughter, a seven-year-old, perfect to be the guinea pig. So, I don't know if I already talked too much, just answering your question, this was the beginning of the story.

Mayo 18:32
It's fantastic. It's also so interesting that you started from comparing different programs in different countries. So not just Canada, you have the experience in England—

Manuela Marujo 18:45
In general, what I can tell you because I found the same here. People who spoke or who taught Portuguese were never accepted as full teachers, because their certificates—of course—are Portuguese. So, among the staff in elementary schools, and then secondary schools—because Canada ended up having also Portuguese at the secondary school level. Teachers told me they were never felt as the others. They were always think—well, your certificate is not accepted in Canada. You are a teacher, but you are not really like us. So, I found that also in England, also in Germany, and—France I didn't do the study, but of course, I read about what the teachers said. So, there was—if I can compare—there was a common thing, it’s the lack of acknowledgement that “you are a teacher, but because you didn't study here, you are not like us.” And among the principals, oh I have many stories, really sad stories. For example—just as one anecdote, in one school, where a very high percentage of Portuguese kids studying during the day, the principal was not in favour of language—after-school language teaching, so he would make life hard, really hard for the kids to attend after school. Some of them in the same classrooms. So, for example, one day, this principal was very difficult, told me “All the kids steal crayons and things, so we don't want *them* here. We avoid having this class in the evening.” I

said, “What do you mean?” So, it’s a child that sits in that chair during the day, uses the same pencil, you call that stealing? Do you want me to tell the parents that the children are different in the evening than they are during the day? So, I had this kind of struggle to convince the principals and some of the teachers that the kids didn't change from 3:30 to 4:30. And it was sometimes a very unpleasant experience. Because I volunteered a lot in the Portuguese community, I had the opportunity of going and discussing with the principals, lots of the practicalities of entering the school, who has access, and there was this—I don't know—animosity against using the school after hours, but it implies more money for staff. And of course, they have caretakers. So, I have lots of unpleasant experiences and the principal—

Experiences of Language Activism and Experiences as a Parent

Mayo 22:26
Did you find these kinds of struggles in schools, when you first visited the program around 1981? Or did you find it like after you joined U of T and started to get involved more in HLP?

Manuela Marujo 22:42
At beginning, everything was wonderful. I mean, they were really excited, there was a lot of money. The federal government was supporting. So, if you read the laws, at a certain point, federal government sent money. So, they could hire more caretakers, they could hire teacher assistants. So, there was this chance that the bureaucrats or the administrators got money. And of course, that has a lot to do with it. So, the program was very welcomed. The parents—they did a lot of parent meetings, parents this, parents that—because they had the money to do it. The beginning was very, very pleasant. When I came here, I saw it and I said, “Oh my god, this is the ideal world of teaching immigrant kids their language,” because there was support. When I did my study, there was support in the school where I went. The principal was very nice. And she wanted to provide everything that she could, we asked for videos, she would buy the videos. If we would ask for something, she would come and bring an artist or a writer, they would do that. There was *money*. And I think unfortunately, that were [what] the administrators care about. If there was money, we had visitors from Portugal, there was, the opportunity was there and they really were taking advantage of it.

But, for example, the Toronto School Board and the Catholic school board, huh, they were very different. For example, I remember having a meeting at the Catholic school board with superintendents, with principals of—I don't know how many schools—the boss, my boss—so this was immediately after I went back to Portugal in 1981. I convinced—well I convinced—I also told them how exciting this was in Canada, etc. So, there was another visit here from the Portuguese officials. And I was, of course, less that day. So, my boss—she couldn't speak English, but she was addressing the big meeting, it was like 100 something people from different schools. And we were interested in giving, donating books, Portuguese books. And the school board didn't accept, they said, “Oh, no, no, we do not accept anything from a foreign country. Because we don't know the content, it has to be approved by the Catholic committee.” And I remember in that meeting, she was trying to say how a language could enhance the opportunity of these kids, and I remember so well, one of the superintendents telling the group, the large group, “Well, listen, I only speak English. I’m doing very well. I’m the superintendent of this board. Why learn the language? You don't need the language.” I was so [overlap]—this was in the beginning. So, when she came—because I was there, and I had to translate for her. I had to tell her, “They don’t want our books. They don’t think it’s worth to learn the language, because the superintendent just me, even told us ‘I don't even own a passport. Why do I need a passport? I'm very happy with my life.’” This was Catholic board.

The Toronto School Board, the public, they were always more open. I was in the program committee. It was called Language Promotion Committee. Of course, some of them didn't speak any other language. But some did, and they could see the positive effect of knowing—I said “Listen, in Europe, we speak at least three [languages] from school. I had to learn French I had to learn English that was compulsory and then I chose German and Italian.” I said, “In Europe, that’s what we do.” They said, “We don’t need more languages.” This was the Catholic board. “I'm perfectly well speaking English.” At a certain point, we had this education campaign “Monolingualism is a Disease” and we wear, you know, our buttons in these meetings. We did that! Because there was so over the years—oh my god, there was so many fights. And as you said at the beginning, Jeff, the language program is always the one they start cutting when there's a budget, you know, problem. So, after I finished my everything, I was always an activist in the school. And I went to that board on Sheppard so many times. Cameras, you know, all sorts of things. I went once to a school here, St. Antony’s. They didn’t want the program to go on. So, I brought the Portuguese [media’s] cameras and they didn't allow them to come into the school (Jeff is laughing here). And I said “Oh, perfect. I’ll go walk outside I’m going to tell you didn’t allow me to.” I mean, they didn’t, the principal didn’t allow, and I said “Here I am! The principal forbids us from entering the school!” So, there was lots and lots of struggles to—not to implement, because the problem was already there, it’s to have it continue they put all sorts of obstacles at a certain point, after Mike Harris, everything went out.

Jeff 29:38
If I can just ask you, by chance, have any of those buttons left anymore, right? The monolingual—any of the buttons “Monolingualism is a disease," does that look—(Laughs)

Manuela Marujo 29:44
I must have one somewhere (laughs). After that campaign, it was really funny, because we had a very activist parent committee, and I remember going to many schools because I also accepted as a volunteer to do many things. And one of them was to evaluate children who came from abroad, immigrant kids, I think this was in the 90s. And I was working for the North York Board. I don't remember how I got this, but I was working, and I went to schools, and people would welcome me, and say, “Oh, where are you from? You have such cute accent.” I said, "Are you monolingual? I'm sorry, I have a certain problem—" (laughs). And so we started this kind of reverse things. And these kids, it was amazing how the teachers discriminated some of these kids because they didn't speak—The evaluation was done in a way that they always looked bad. The testing was done for kids who really understood what was going on, not language in that case, but like culturally. They would ask questions the kids have no idea. I don't know, what's the popular, I don't know this or that. And I had to face some of this—principals and teachers with very nasty kind of attitude, because they said, “What are you testing? Are you testing language or testing integration in the society where a kid just happened to arrive?” I had a teacher who told me once “I was testing this blind child.” So, when—he had problems in learning, because he didn't speak Portuguese. And he was blind, right? So, he needed special things—And when I spoke to her, she said, “Are all the Portuguese children like that?” I said, “Do we mean blind? Now we are not all blind.” Oh, I have lots of stories like this. There was a lack. I don't know how it is now.

But there was a lack of sensitivity that the training for differences in those days, when the program was very good, especially on paper. But then you had the principals and the faculty, the other teachers who had no idea! No idea what the child was going through, or what the parents were doing. “Why don't the Portuguese parents come to the meetings then? if they're so interested in their childhood—.” My parents never went to a school. We were not allowed! When I started, my child was seven. So, when I started going into a school, I was always like, fear. I was thinking, maybe someone's going to stop me here. Who am I? Am I allowed? In our schools [in Portugal], parents were not allowed. And because we came in, I came from a country, which had had a dictatorship for 50 years, right. So, schools were for

teachers and principals, not for parents. So, the Portuguese parents, as *many* other parents, had no idea that it looks bad on the kids not to show in school. They had no idea. They still don't, because it was not something that we did. And for years, I tried to spread this word: come to school, you have to come and meet your teacher, because some parents didn't even know which class [or] which level the kids were, because they were not supposed to do that sort of approach to the school. So, it—I think it takes a long time for the teachers, regular teachers to understand that. And in those days, that was a big issue. I don't know is now, but I guess not much has changed.

Jeff 34:32
Yes not much has changed. Parents' cultural experiences of schools, they bring that with them. That hasn't really changed. But can I assume your daughter would have been in Portuguese language classes when she was at school here, correct?

Manuela Marujo 34:48
That is another issue. So, when I came, I met of course all the counselors and community liaisons. And a friend told me "Don't put your child in a Portuguese community-based school. They're not good." And I said "What?" I said "No." They don't have—again, this is, as you know, how do you call it—a circle of things. The principals, because the parents didn't care, or didn't go, didn't push for good schooling. So, some of the schools, where most Portuguese kids attended, they didn't have a good class environment, the teachers were (gesture of not caring)—the principals were (the same gesture)—So I was advised, "Do not put enroll your kids in the Portuguese community." And I didn't choose to live there, either. So, when I came, I got an apartment, far from the community. So, my daughter went to Huron Public School because it was close to my office at university. For me, it was convenient. I even lived in Mississauga and brought my child to school every day. The principal didn't care [that we lived outside the city] because I was a university professor, right? Because if someone else was, you wouldn't allow because it was not allowed. So, my [daughter], when I wanted her to have [Portuguese] classes, I had to enroll her in an evening program. And it was not good, too (lower voice). Of course, I know this, I knew all the teachers, and some of the teachers, they were Portuguese, but they were not graduated. So, in those days, there was a lot of demand for teachers, a lot. They didn't have enough. I was part of the interviewing process in many schools, because as a heritage language liaison officer, that was one of my jobs. So, as a volunteer in that committee, when the principal wanted to hire a Portuguese teacher, they would call me, in order to ask them questions, etc. And the lack of preparation was pff! was so evident. So, my daughter, like so many other kids, started having fever, "I don't want to go to this Portuguese school"—And most of my friends, their kids never attend Portuguese schools. So, what I did instead, she went to Portugal three months in the summer. Spoke with grandparents, attended parties at (inaudible). And her Portuegese is quite good. Then when she went to university, she took Portuguese classes. That's also common among a little more educated people that could see the level of schooling. Recently, I have grandchildren. So, one of my, the eldest one, she's 11 now. She was in a school here, downtown, not downtown but in the Portuguese area. And I told my daughter, and she agreed she should go to Portuguese school, Portuguese classes. They had a very small class and she went. My daughter said, "Mom, I tried, but she doesn't want to be there. Because the teacher was—," and I know her too. I mean, she was this old program lady that taught grammar, and history to second graders in a way that they hated. So, she ended up not being successful with their class. And the principal was really—I was surprised that he was so welcoming—they had a very small class, I think it was five kids. And it depends, as you know, on the principal, if they don't have a minimum of—I don't know—15 or 20. He was paying this teacher. So, it depends also on a lot on principals, a lot. And then she ended up canceling the class because the kids didn't want to be taught like that. So, it's complex, because it also sometimes the principal is very willing to continue the program, but the quality of it, it's not standardized.

Mayo Kawaguchi 39:50
May I clarify one point about your daughter's schooling, so she went to school in Mississauga for her public—

Manuela Marujo 39:59
No, no, we lived in Mississauga and I brought her to the university closest school, Huron Public School, she went to Huron Public School. It was a very good school. Because OISE students did a lot of practical—I don't know—there. So of course, Margaret Atwood's kids were there, other sorts of kids. So, we, of course, as an educated parent, and I was so much involved—well, I knew which school is good, so unfortunately, they have schools, bad schools, and good schools. And so-so schools. If you are really interested in learning, you speak with people, they tell you don't go to that school, don't put your child there, don't take them and put your child there. So, Huron Public School was a school that I knew, was very good. So of course, my office was there, in five minutes. So, I had the opportunity, and she attended school until—And the same with middle school. I mean, you know which schools are great. It's so sad, because I had a radio program for 10 years in the, a Portuguese radio program. And that's where they educate parents: "Ask this questions to the teachers," because the teacher said, "Oh your son is so well behaved." I said, "Don't care about behaviour. It's not behaviour you want to know. So, does he do in maths please? What's his reading level?" Because parents don't know. And there is this language that parents do not know. And the teacher said he's so—and in Portuguese, we have this word, "educated," that is very misunderstood, you know, "Oh, ele é educado;" educado doesn't mean he knows a lot, just well behaved. So, I've seen—and still seen the same problem now, parents do not know what's going on in a school if they are not involved. A lot of thing.

I'll give you an example. I knew there was a summer school at the islands, science school. I don't know if it still exists. I knew it there, because my friends in the Toronto Board told me, there's a very nice school in summer, a science school. I said, "How do you get there?"" "Oh, it's only for—." Who knows? So I went to the principal of high school and said, "I want my child to go during the summer, for science school at the island." He said, "How do you know about it?" "Oh, it's a public school, it's a public program, right?" How do you enroll your child, I want to, "give me the form." He said, "Oh, well, I will have to—It's not the time yet." I said, "Which deadline? Please give me the form as soon as it comes." And I was on top of them, on top of them, on top of them. It was so upset that I knew about [that] school. So, what kind of kids go to [that] school? Teachers' children, principles' children, the same with music camp. The same with lots of these things, horse riding, blah, blah, blah, paid by the board.

So, my thing when I went to Huron was, I want to know everything about the school. I volunteered after school program. I taught them cooking. I knew everybody in school, all the teachers, all the kids. They all wanted to be in my class because I made cookies. And I got to know the real thing going on. But they always said what about parents who do not get involved? How do they know about these things? They don't. And so now my daughter is in Cookstown with the kids. I said, please get involved in the school. And she did. She's already in the school parental whatever. If you are not—well, you cannot, some parents of course cannot, because they work long hours. But they will miss a very important part of the school, everything. I think this system, and I spoke about it many times. It's really unfair for immigrant parents. They don't tell immigrant parents, get in the parent committee, get in the program committee, get some, like what every committee that could be, parental involvement committee; language promotion committee, heritage language committee. It's a lot of time, but it's worth, because you know what's going on. But of course, it's not for everyone. And I was very privileged because, of course, people respected me coming from the academic world, I spoke both English and Portuguese, so they couldn't you know, try to tell me things that I could ask for clarification, the jargon that they use with parents, that I say "What's that? What do you mean?" you know, so but most parents, they don't have that, those tools. And they suffered, the kids suffer from that.

Works as a Member of HELACON (Heritage Languages and Concurrent Programs Consultative Committee): From Heritage to International Languages

Mayo 45:53
And you were also a committee member of the heritage language program and concurrent program. So how did your work come about?

Manuela Marujo 46:03
I knew about it as soon as I came, I knew there was this possibility of parent representation. So I went to meetings, several meetings, as soon as there was a vacancy for volunteer work. So, people go and drop, etc. So, I became involved, directly involved, and I had to go to the meetings, of course, you have to go to the meetings, you have to make time to be there. And the longer hours sometimes. So, it's what I did, not just because I was a parent, but because I was interested in the topic. So, for me, it was a source of get to know what they say what they think. I met interesting people, I mean, very committed people, Tam Goosen, for example. She was great. She was the chair of the committee for I don't know how many years. She really did try to better education for—the Chinese parents were always very involved. So, there were people that were there for years. And so, then I got that invitation from the Ministry, Tony Silipo, was from Italian background; he was also very aware of the importance of second language, first language. And I was part of the international language committee. So, when we changed the name [from heritage language]. We worked against many forces, political forces, because no one wanted to change the name. But that time, the name started to have this kind of negative ethnic connotation. So, we discussed the name for many long hours of committee meetings. It was two years, two or three years, it ended up being approved. So, the international language took a little more of positive, I don't know what, for those who didn't think it was worth, but we convinced them. Portuguese is international language, as is Chinese, at university thousands of students studied, so why not give from the very beginning that kind of connotation to the language programs? So, we took a while, but we were happy that it was, the name changed. There were, of course, the conservatives who didn't want to, but we were convinced that it would benefit the program in the end.

I don't know how the programs are [doing] now. I think the programs—the numbers are very bad, empirically. I worked closely with the Portuguese language coordinator, because he was one of my colleagues at U of T. And he is now the coordinator at the Portuguese language program. And I know the numbers, I have access to the numbers. First of all, Portuguese are not coming as they used to come in the 70s and 80s and 90s, even 90s. So, the programs lack students. What I believe is other ethnic groups are coming, so the needs, the questions, the problems will be the same for other parents. And it's a shame that they don't want these things to be very well known because then you struggle from the beginning, facing the same challenges that was still—especially with parents involvement—

Mayo 46:14
It's so interesting that because the program experienced the name change from heritage to international, so this idea of name change came from the board level is—

Manuela Marujo 50:31
No, I think we started in—I don't remember we initially—I know, it was the Ministry, Tony Silipo, I knew Tony, [who] passed, very well. And he was very approachable and easy, because he came from Italian background. He also—I'm sure he struggled with his Italian and learning Italian etc. And in those days, there were a lot of democratics (New Democrats) that were like—the Minister of Culture was Rosario Marchese, He also play the role—So there were a very united group of (New) Democrats that invited

people they knew, shared the same kind of philosophy regarding language learning, and the importance of the first language. So, I really don't remember how it started. But we were—there was a very large group of people. I'm sure documented in the logs, we went to the Ministry—every—there was people from Ottawa, people from other boards, large boards of education, and we all share, more or less, the same philosophy, if the language teaching did have a more positive name, it was for everybody. And in those—so this was the 90s, there was already the idea that we should welcome in heritage language classes, kids from all backgrounds, so people could learn Chinese, or could learn Italian or Ukrainian, in the same class that Ukrainian born kids. So, that helped us to convince whoever that a language is the language can be learned by anyone, right? You just need the good teacher to be able to attract and motivate all sorts of kids in the classroom. So, I think that helped us to make the name, international, instead of heritage, because it was to also attract teachers, and other parents who didn't value languages, that the language was a very great tool for the future of their kids. So, everything combined in those days, it's sort of the early 90s. And we were successful, and I think lucky with the minister. The minister was very—was on our side, we didn't need to convince him, he was already convinced. We just needed to get all documents and the literature etc., that approved that an international language is spoken all over the world, you don't have to be connecting it with the prejudice of being just heritage.

Mayo 53:52
This international language program and concurrent programs, [they] disbanded in the board?

Manuela Marujo 54:01
I don't know how it is now. What I know is we always had to use concurrent, because—and I agree—some kids didn't want to learn languages. So, they would have the same time, they could go to art, or music or something. So, the language program was—I think the funds went to those. So, if you really didn't want to, your parents didn't want you to learn a language, you could learn something else. So, and that was the philosophy and we all agreed, of course, it is not forced to learn a language, but it was the same hours. I think that was when the integrated program came about. So, if you had half an hour to learn Chinese, the kids who didn't want to learn, they went to art or dance or something like that. So that's how those concurrent program work.

Mayo 55:09
Yeah, I see. Um, I guess, Jeff, you mentioned something in around 1996—

Jeff 55:20
That's right. The part of the question is the board, the Toronto Board disbanded the committee, HELACON became ILACON. And then they got rid of that committee. So do you recall how that came about, like why they got rid of that committee?

Manuela Marujo 55:34
We went to many meetings. I think it started with the Catholic, I think the Catholic board was the first—So we had a lot of attempts to continue the struggle, because we wanted to have a voice there in the board. So, we were part of—so when there was a board meeting, we were invited, I was there many times. So, when new budget came, the first program to be cut was the concurrent and the language program. And there we were with our journalist friends and our cameras, etc., trying once again, to postpone that. So, I'm not sure now, when the last meeting was, I don't know. I know I was already out of this. And I went there two or three times, because it was another name, another person who had been involved. And for many years, we worked together with that they called, not liaison—but they were responsible for the languages. So, they hired someone at the board level, just to deal with language programs, etc. And we met with them, before going to the board's main, large meetings. And

some of them were really sympathize with the program. Because that's what they were hired to do, right? But less and less money came, then they also get disappointed, and they don't have the money to do anything with the program. I don't know the person now is in charge, I met lots of them after I finished my involvement. But I'm sure the cuts have a lot to do with the enthusiasm that they have for the programs, and then they don't need.

And parents also—as I said, the groups that are coming the newcomers, they have to start from the beginning again. We learned in the process of going there understanding what they're saying is one thing, what they do is something different. But it takes a lot of time. And I don't know, I remember when I think it was the Somalis or something came in great numbers, they also started going to schools demanding in schools for language. And I just thought, "Poor guys, they're doing the same that we did in the 70s." And now, with so many parents from, Punjabi—new languages— that they have to teach in school, parents don't know anything. And being European, I had a better understanding of the Anglo mentality. But sometimes I thought, coming from a different culture, what you hear is not what they mean. And it's really difficult to—How many years does it take for you to understand that they say, "Oh, yeah, we are going to do this. But we have a small issue to solve. And let's see in the next committee meeting." And then you go to the committee meeting, the agenda, and then "Oh, it's not in the agenda today. Sorry, you should have told us in." That sort of things, takes a long time to grasp. And you have to be really assertive sometimes. I said, "I'm sorry, you could also understand that this is a language issue, but you have to be at the same kind of language use that they tried to…" Good luck. And I was intimidated a lot of times, especially in the language promotion committee. The chair at those those days in the board, he was a very nice person. He was really pro-languages, but then he went, and the other person didn't understand what we're talking about. Didn't speak a second language, didn't care about the second language. So, parents now, coming from other backgrounds, they face these challenges: learning the language of the bureaucracy, the administrative language. And sometimes you just feel [like] giving up. It's very tiring.

Changes of Heritage Language Programs and Communities

Mayo 1:00:58
So, I think maybe now, I can hear your stories from a different vantage point. So, I was wondering how your understanding of the heritage language program changed, from the beginning to—

Manuela Marujo 1:01:21
No, it changed—there was—I think we followed, a little bit, the Greeks' steps. The Greeks were, I remember when I came [to Toronto from Portugal], the Greeks had lots of programs, they were really involved, etc. And there was a very good group of activists when I came that were on top of everything. So when we, when I came, it was easy to continue. I didn't have to do a lot of things because the Greeks already had started demanding programs, knowing how many numbers you needed in a school. And so, when the Portuguese started being very involved [in linguistic and cultural programs at the school level], it was in the 70s. Because as I said, they came in the 50s. But men alone, single, [for] most of them. So the kids started really—the first school in the Portuguese community started in 1965, with a group of 25 kids. Then, the schools only in the 70s. I think the first program was Ryerson Public School. And, it started being more and more because more people—So it was when I came in the 80s, it was already going on. There was a parent involvement committee. So, I got in. And as I said, because I had a child, I was very interested in knowing everything about the schools. So, it was an easy thing for me, because I spoke the language I could, coming from the university, not [as] most of the parents, they were not educated, their English was broken. I mean, they were very much involved, but they couldn't express themselves. They always told me, "Yeah, you speak!" So, it was a kind of advantageous time to be active.

As I said, the Toronto Board was very welcoming, the Catholic board was not. So, we had to go through the Catholic thing, the conservative thing. And what was bad was most kids were in the Catholic system. So, we had really a lot of work to do. So later in the 90s. I don't know if it comes in my case. I was part of what we call coalition—Portuguese Canadian Coalition for a better education, because of the dropout rates. And during those times of the coalition, we really entered the Catholic separate school board, we have to—because that's where the kids were. And we were struggling with the dropout rates in secondary schools. So, there were lots of media. So, it came in the headlines of the newspapers, that Portuguese kids were not going to university, so we had to be very active. And so, there were a few trustees that supported us. And so, a group of us got together, got the attention of parents, media, etc. And it was there that the board of the Catholic board really started working with us, but they were also worried, of course. But from the beginning, my recollection is that the Toronto Board, the public board, most public boards, but Toronto Board of Education was always more in tune with our challenges and our problems and willing to address them, really making an effort putting the money there, the principles, if we ask—there's a new class, for example, I remember Regal Road [Public School], they opened the class on our initiative. Because it's not automatic, and parents didn't know that you have to request. So, what we did during those days was to inform parents that we couldn't do that, but you can, as a parent, that together another 25 signatures, and the board *has* to hire a teacher. So we knew the administrative part to pass onto parents. And that's what I fear. It's not public, it's not known. So, when you were a group of parents, and we'll have to find out—I don't know how, you know—

Jeff 1:06:09
Yeah, because the infrastructure, yeah, the period of time, we talked about, say the Greek community had this well-established structure, and the Portuguese community could learn from that. But a lot of that infrastructure is all gone now. And so, it makes a lot of sense that new communities who arrived they can't—there's nothing to plug into. There's no parent movement to plug into necessarily the way there was in the 70s.

Manuela Marujo 1:06:32
The Chinese parents were very active, too. They were always someone very active. So, I'm sure, I don't know if they continue to receive Chinese immigrants. I mean, these were the ones. I think parents—but parents are volunteers. They work long hours. So not everyone has the time to do that. But there should be someone informing the new parents.

Working from Academia

Jeff 1:07:01
Yeah. And at some point, in this process, you decided to get a doctoral degree. That's also in the in the 90s, you joined OISE to get your degree?

Manuela Marujo 1:07:12
That was always interesting—I had a job in Portugal. So, one of the reasons that I gave myself was, Okay I'm going to study this, that I already had—And I knew that bilingualism—so I worked with Jim Cummins. So, I knew the work by Jim. So, I went to—two or three years later—went to OISE. And I spoke with Jim and I said, I'd like to work with you, because this is what interests me, it was very hard to get into OISE. They put me all sorts of—took me years. First of all, I had a degree in Portugal, which is a bachelor with honors, we didn't have masters in those days in my area, it's brand new. So, I had to do a master at OISE in order to qualify to then go into my PhD. I was working full time all the time. So, I did that. So, I had to do a MEd. And then I remember OISE in those days putting so, so many

obstacles. The degree had to come my original degree. They didn't accept the translation. So, I ended up bringing—I have this, we call it Portugal, we have this—It's made of iron or something like this—to where they put your degree. And it's with them. It has to be signed with this thing sealed. So, one day—I was so upset, I brought that and the lady in the administrative said—"This is not your original." I said, "You want my original?" And I said, "I dare you photocopy." She said, "Oh, I see." And Jim had to come one day just to prove—I don't know why, what— It was hard. It was hard to get into the PhD program.

Jeff 1:08:42
I'm sorry to say but not much has changed (laughs)

Manuela Marujo 1:08:45
This lady, I don't know who she thought she was, but then on finally every paper was signed and think she said, "Well, now it's too late because there's no advisory—there's no one who can be your thesis advisor." I said, "Really?" I went to Jim's office. I said, "Jim, could you please come to me?" [and Jim said] "I'll be her advisor." (laughs) I mean, it was hard, though. But to answer your question, my main goal was to study this kind of issue with immigrant kids that I had already learned by experience, and study it in a way that I could argue, if necessary, on the advantages on this. It didn't benefit me anything in my job. Because I was hired with the experience I had. And the practice—I had done a lot of on teacher learning. I had taught at university in Lisbon for many summers, I had good—So my department chair wasn't impressed, "uh, congratulations on your PhD". That was it. Didn't get any money or anything more than I have. It was really something I wanted to do. I was happy to conclude some of the things that I had thought I would find out. But that was my interest. I said I would go back to Portugal after that, and then I stayed.

Jeff 1:11:10
Oh, really? Oh, that's interesting. Wow. Well, we are very glad you did that work. Because I was saying to Mayo, when we met to get ready for the interview today, there's a way that a stance, there's a way you tell you talk about yourself, you write about yourself, your background, that it's extremely engaging, but it also makes the document [Manuela's doctoral thesis] so pleasurable to read. I don't know you at all, but I can imagine you and reading this document, I learned a lot from it.

Manuela Marujo 1:11:41
What this thesis brought me was a lot of awareness that there are so many other issues. For example, I just finished organizing a conference on immigrant women. And this was my eighth, and we celebrate the 20th anniversary of this network. So, I started this in 2003. I called it "The Voice and Choice of Portuguese Immigrant Women." And that came from my research because I saw so many women doing incredible work on language education. So many mothers never acknowledged, so many grandmothers. So, I started these two networks. And we have been international. We went to China, we went to France, Brazil, Portugal islands and Portugal mainland, and to the United States with this conference. So, this was our 20th anniversary. It came from my research. And the other one that I did was I started another networking of conferences with the importance of grandparents. I called it "The Voice of Immigrant Grandparents." Why? Because many of my students tell me, they know Portuguese because of their grandparents. And I started reading—and really—the grandparents have an important role in language acquisition, and [it's] never acknowledged. So, I already did six conferences on the importance of grandparents in language acquisition, but not just but the cultural patrimony itself. So, we already went everywhere. And well, we started in the Azores, because you know, there's a lot of Azorean. Portuguese from the islands, and they have a different accent. That's very prejudiced. And I had lots of students coming to me and said, "I'm here," in English, "to learn proper Portuguese." I said, "What do you mean?" [They said,] "Oh I speak a dialect." I said, "There are no dialects in Portugal.

What do you think?" "Oh, I have this funny accent that everyone laughs that. My grandmother taught me this and I want to get rid of it." I said, "What?" So, it has been a very long process of language acquisition through your family. It's okay. It might not be the standard. And of course, Italians even have more problems with that because they have the dialects and generally the grandmothers, grandparents speak the dialect, not the main standard enough. But in Portugal, we don't have that. We just have one language, it's a very small country. So, I worked on that and what really interested in that—so I've been doing this, my last conference was—so I have done this year, two and two years, one years the women—last year was Fresno University hosted it. We did it on Zoom last year, and it was very well attended. And it's everywhere, YouTube, Instagram. Now with this media, we can do a lot of the promotion of our research…

Jeff Bale 1:11:59
…Could you say the names, the names were the voice and choice.

Manuela Marujo 1:15:21
This one that I just did now—I can send you the program because it was in English and Portuguese. It's called "The Voice and Choice of Portuguese Immigrant Women," and then I called it "Mobilities and Interculturalities." I had 32 speakers. I had 20 here and the rest online. And the other one, it's called the Voice of Grandparents. Wait the second—I'm speaking Portuguese "As Vozes Avós" Yeah. And we've published a little bit of some of the books of the conferences. One of them is online.

How to Approach Language

Jeff 1:16:05
Well, let's turn to some questions that do come from the thesis itself. One of the themes that we have been paying attention to, in our research, and especially in Mayo's and her thesis: she's written really beautifully about this are the terms used to refer to the languages we're talking about: third language, heritage language. And one of the we're paying attention to in the project is that the three of us, for example, may use the word heritage language in this, on the Zoom call, but we may have three very different understandings of that word, right? In your thesis, though, you use primarily the word for the term, first language, in quotation marks. So, can you say a little more about that choice you made? What that means for you?

Manuela Marujo 1:16:49
Yeah. Well, I wrote a few articles about it. Now I call it in Portuguese, "a lingua de afecto" the love language, the affectionate language. It's not the first language really. At that time, there were already—there are couples of two languages, right? Portuguese married the Italians a lot. So, what's the first language really, sometimes it's the mother's Italian, and then Father speaks or not Portuguese. So, I have a problem in saying first language for kids born here. Many—like for example—my stepson is first language was Portuguese. He was raised by his grandparents, and mother. He couldn't speak a word of English when he went to kindergarten. That was Portuguese, his first language, but most, I wouldn't say there, it's not their first language. It's home language, if they are lucky enough to have a family who speaks Portuguese. A lot of parents were willing to learn English from the kids. So, they didn't speak Portuguese. A lot of teachers told them not to speak Portuguese, because it would confuse the kids. So, when I use first—it's really—it has to be discussed. Many different cases, depending on the home where the kid is brought up. Of course, in my house, my child came when she was seven. It was our first language. She became fluent in English, but her first language is Portuguese, they'll speak Portuguese. But the situation with my daughter and many others is we speak Portuguese and English intermixed. A lot of subjects become more easier to deal with in English, and we just change then we say something and we started speaking in Portuguese, and I think probably it's the case of many

people. We are not fully bilingual—what is what is being fully bilingual, but we are so comfortable in both languages, even at home with my husband, he is Portuguese, but he has been here 50 years so language like English for him, it's easier to speak in many subjects. So, we switch all the time. We say something in Portuguese, then we switch to English and vice versa. And with the kids, I would say it happens a lot. So, first language, really, what is it? Even if a child grows here with being brought up by parents and uncles, large families, if he goes to the street and he speaks with his friends in English or school. So, first language is discussed in this—And the problem with this teacher that I was talking about in schools. They really were teaching kids Portuguese as their first language. And that's where they fail. It's not first language. They use the books from Portugal. They use—as if it was mother tongue, and it's not.

Jeff 1:20:35
Yeah, I'm really glad I asked because that that helps me make better sense of the quotation marks at the sort of like, the almost like an extra like, *use with caution*. *Use this term with caution*.

Manuela Marujo 1:20:48
Ask lots of questions.

Jeff 1:20:50
Exactly, exactly.

Where the Language Issues Stood and Last Long: Teachers, Portuguese-speakers, Parents from different language backgrounds, Board stuff, the ESL Project

Jeff 1:20:53
Another topic, so that the gap in time you were here in 81. And went away then came back in 85. And as you know, that period in between where some of the most intense conflicts over the HLP, the two teacher boycotts, a lot of very rambunctious meetings, public meetings and such. And at some point, in your thesis, you write about parents on the HELACON, just being tired from it all being really, really tired. And I'm wondering, since you weren't actually here in Toronto, during that time that, what the people tell you about those conflicts?

Manuela Marujo 1:21:30
The impression was, and it still is it among some people were here, the teachers didn't want to work half an hour more. That's how it all came about. And I spoke with some of the elementary teachers in English, Anglos, they said, "Why, why should we work more because of language teaching?" So it was a question of the—I think it was half an hour that the board was demanded, they didn't want to work that extra half an hour. I'm a teacher, I know we have not just to teach, but the poor elementary teachers, they have to go to playgrounds and then teach—so I understand their point of view. It was the language teaching came with that extra time. So, they didn't want it. So that was the main issue. I think the boards also didn't probably volunteer to pay them that extra half an hour. So, it was a labour question, and the parents I spoke with, because there were some parents were very active in the parental involvement committee in those days of the boycott, they said, "Well, it's the teachers, they don't want to work. And we want our kids to learn the language, but they don't want to work. They are trying not to work." So, they were bringing other teachers to teach the language, but they had to have this extended timetable. That's what it was all about.

Jeff 1:23:09
Interesting. Because what some of the archival data that we have, parents who were on the, what wasn't called HELACON then, it was still the Heritage Languages Advisory Committee back in those

days. But they, in fact, Eduardo Sousa, the Portuguese representative, [he said] this is racism, teachers are being racist. Was that talked about in that way?

Manuela Marujo 1:23:36
I know Eduardo, I mean, he gave me all these files, etc. when I started working—because he works for so many years, and Rosalinda da Silva was also—they ended up being partners. She also spoke a lot about this because she was involved. Yeah, they said it was—And it's always this question of being different. And as I said, there were a lot of people from Azores, and even between mainlanders and Azoreans, there's this resistance in the way they speak, you know, language is very powerful, right? The way you speak tells who you are, right? So, in the beginning, the Azoreans were less involved less active. And from what—then I learned from my students, I mean, the accent made them a little bit aware that when—For example, I remember one principal in St. Mary School. He and his wife I think they were both Azorean. When they open their mouths made me laugh, because the accent was so strong. And even as a mainlander, I was not used to this accent. I sometimes couldn't understand it. And there's nothing wrong with it. There's an explanation [for their use of Portuguese], the French were there, so there's an explanation. [But] in those days, we didn't know. So, there's this little thing, you don't even know to speak Portuguese. So, people were less involved. And if you speak, you don't speak very well. So, it's not racism, but it's a little prejudice against language. You know, I remember going to the Azores for the first time and I kept saying, "what? what?" I couldn't understand the strong accent. And that, brought to the immigration setting, becomes a little more stronger. You are different. You don't speak like other. And people because they felt that they didn't want to speak out. So, they got away, they were not in front. So, there was— when Eduardo tells that—there was this thing, a little language prejudice.

Jeff 1:26:09
Yeah. Okay, that's very interesting.

Manuela Marujo 1:26:13
I had this student, a summer student went to the Azores. He said he had landed in the wrong Island, and he said, "This is not Portuguese." (laughs). He sent us an email and said, "Am I in the right place? Because I don't understand anything people say." I said, "No, it's just the accent, you'll get used to it." (laughs)

Jeff 1:26:31
You'll figure it out, haha. Another question I wanted to ask, has to do. It's obvious why your thesis focused on the Portuguese community and Augusta School. That's clear. But I wonder what impressions you took away about the Chinese language program when you were doing the work there, and particularly the extent to which Portuguese families or parents and Chinese families and parents interacted, in the space of this ESL project? What was that like?

Manuela Marujo 1:27:04
No, there was a there was a good connection with other parents, I think even Koreans in the school where I worked. There was, I think, a lot of Koreans. So that we worked with the Korean, with the Chinese. There was another program for what, which one, we were all in synchrony, we really tried to be in the meetings. The principal knew all of the people, the parents, and we discussed that at large—We should be there, we should be asking the same questions, etc. So, the programs were really very successful in that school, and Jim was there. Jim Cummins had the project at that time that he was also developing with the schools. So, it also, there was these academics from OISE coming, we were awared and the principal, she was a woman she was a pro-language-learning. So, there was—I think

we felt very welcoming never felt, you know, that I was not wanted in school. We could walk in classes, attend classes etc. I remember both the Chinese and there was the Korean—I forgot the other one, because it probably was not much involved. But we were all having no issues with school, it was a very good environment in the school.

Jeff 1:28:43
And was that your experience—I guess over the years that parents from different linguistic communities were able to work together in a given school. Was that a common experience? Or was it more to that?

Manuela Marujo 1:28:57
What I found in the HELACON meetings, etc., is we all were there because we really believed. The ones who didn't go, either they didn't or couldn't. So there was a very, I think people were very informed of the issues. Tam Goosen was very good in doing that. She would explain in very simple terms, what we should be doing. She directed people really well. When you go to a school, just go to the principal's office, ask this question or the—you can get information on these—I think the HELACON meetings helped us before we went to schools, to know what to get on, what was the main thing. It helped me and I believe it helped other people. We knew what we should be doing, allowed to do, we knew our rights. People who didn't go to the meetings in other boards are not sure. This was the Toronto Board of Education. And as I said, a lot easier to work with the Toronto Board than with the separate school board. We felt a lot more distant from the main, you know, people who are in charge, they didn't volunteer so many information on how to do things. The Toronto public board was very big.

Jeff 1:30:44
It's one thing, we've been studying this program from the beginning and looking at the various task forces that the Toronto Board struck. And I, I'm from the States originally, and it was a teacher there, I don't have an experience of a school board that took these questions so seriously, and studied them for so long. So, it's, as an outsider to Ontario, it's been such a learning experience to see, oh this is—I'm not sure it's way no, but back then, that's the way it was and—

Manuela Marujo 1:31:15
Toronto board, they had a very good library with all the reports, I had access to everything. I spent hours. It was [between] McCaul and University that building it all I spent hours in that building, but they were really keen on getting the answers, and report on the report on that, as I said, there was money, that those things. So that was easy. They could send a proposal, and they were almost sure they would get the money. So, there was, at the I think, at the director's level, etc. They were committed, and so they worked a lot easier. They didn't need to convince themselves that this was needed. For example, when the, I think it was the *Toronto Star*, came with big dropout rates of the Portuguese kids and Black kids, the board immediately was willing to give us access to all the numbers all—study this, study that, come in, find out the problem. The separate school board? They didn't want to show us the system. It took *years*, for us to know how many kids went to university, how many kids really dropped. Because, "Oh, we don't do this by ethnic group." There was always an excuse. The Toronto Board, [had] all the answers, nothing was hidden from us. You could get copies of all the reports. When I left my office, I had so much I gave it everything to one of colleagues that is doing heritage language stuff. Because I had all the reports of the board. They gave me everything, no problem "Oh you want this?" I said, "Oh yes go and copy it!"

Jeff 1:33:20
Wow. Wow. So, in terms of the project itself, though, that you studied yourself. There are some indications in the thesis, why the positive effects may not have been as long lasting, a change of principle, the program officer from the board went away and so on and so forth. But why do you think

the ESL project in the spirit of collaboration, like you write a lot about how the classroom teacher and the language teacher, like why do you think that positive changed didn't last longer?

Manuela Marujo 1:33:59
I don't know. I think, for example, they had I think those the effects of the— For example, the kids had the opportunity to learn English with the help of so many people, the teacher assistant, and then I could volunteer and be there reading a book. So, there was this open spirit in the classroom. But it took money [and] it took programming; calling a writer; calling a grandfather to tell a story. So, there's a lot of people involved in this. And once that stops, you know, languages—as we know—languages need to be practiced. And it stopped. So, you many more difficulties in hiring teacher assistants who spoke the language, many less opportunities to have a parent there, for example, doing a cooking demonstration. Like my daughter now, my daughter is married to a Jamaican. And last year, she tried to include Black Heritage history in the school. She worked endless hours, no one cares. She's the one who cares. So, she ended up having everybody in the class playing drums, and they brought some drums, things like that. She said, "Mom, I don't know if I want to do this again. And then I spent so much time" and she has the time that the parent who doesn't. The same with the Portuguese—the practical part of—going to a class, you have to have the time that believes—that's very important for your kid's education. Once that stops, being funded, or— My daughter discovered that in her school: They have money, [but] they don't know what to do with it. Do parents know about it? No. Anyone volunteers that information? You have this amount of money, if you want to do an activity? No. You know, so it takes—the belief that is worthwhile. Once the persons involved stop believing, the program goes—and languages are very, it's really sensitive, if you don't practice—I used to speak German fluently. I went to Berlin last time, I couldn't understand them. You need to practice your languages. Once that stops, everything that you did? It's sad, but it's true.

Jeff 1:37:08
Sure, is.

Staying as a Believer of Language Acquisition

Jeff 1:37:10

We have covered a lot of ground today in an hour and a half. Are there any things, anything you want to tell us that we didn't ask about or didn't get to about heritage language education?

Manuela Marujo 1:37:20
I just feel a strong believer in language acquisition. Last week, I went to a session that really really impressed me. At the Faculty Club for seniors [Senior College], there was this session by Merrill Swain that—Merril and Sharon, they did a session called, she did, it was Merril, Talking Matters. And I was really impressed. So Talking Matters, it's her last research project. And she was researching in a senior home, how important talking is for your mental health. People with a little bit of dementia to be much better when you talk when you speak. And I was asking her, "I'm really impressed with your results. But I'm thinking, what about the people, senior homes where they don't speak the person's first language? Have you thought what the problem is?" Because I went once into a senior home, and I came crying. An Italian lady was doing this (gesture of holding a baby) with the doll and speaking in Italian, because no one was—a Japanese lady was talking to a wall for a while. A Portuguese man who knew I was Portuguese, talked for two hours nonetheless, because he hadn't spoken for months in his language. And I thought, oh my god, I had never thought about this, but when you get older, you want to remember your first language, you forget everything else. And talking matters. It really matters. And

they came up with the play that they played in the—Again, I thought, Oh, my god. The first language really matters. Not just talking in the mainstream language. And if I was younger, at the time, this would interest me a lot. What do you do in a senior home where you have 20 people, 50 speaking their own languages. The first language, it's not just for kids. It impresses your whole life. I have friends—I'm now in my 74, and they are in their 70s; also, they said, “I don't want to speak English anymore, I want to speak my language.” And they swear and they said, “I just feel like speaking my own language,” after all these studies that we do with kids with their first language, when you arrive in your 80s or 70s, you don't want, you don't know how to speak another language, you forget the language that you acquire later in life. So, this is something that I was aware of before. But now, as I'm also getting older, it really makes for me so much sense. How do we address this, elderly people cannot communicate in a home where English or French or whatever, is the language. So, I was reading my introduction, I said, “Oh, my god, I still believe all this. It's not outdated” (laughs). I continue to be involved in the Portuguese community, of course, I do a radio program every week.

Jeff 1:38:00
In Portuguese or English?

Manuela Marujo 1:41:16
In Portuguese. Because there is a lot of people here, as we are about half a million in Canada. So, there's an audience. I just wrote a book about Canada in Portuguese, a travel book, because I write a traveling piece every week, every month, I used to do every week after 100. And I said, I got to stop, I’m going to—So I believe language is still a powerful tool for your happiness, and your own language. It brings something that other than—I am comfortable in speaking English, but I’d rather speak Portuguese, if I have a person that understands my language. And languages are very good tools for traveling, for doing all sorts of things. But being born with this wealth, knowledge that you have when you acquire language, it’s a shame. I blame the board for letting kids enter the board with two languages and leaving with one. Sometimes three languages, and they leave with one. *How* can this happen? And I was always always voicing these concerns, I said, “How dare you?” A kid speaks Punjabi and leaves the school just with English because it's not good to speak Punjabi in school? You should give the children the opportunity to develop the language not to cut it. That's one of the things that our education system is doing. So, in the 70s, as I said, there was this awareness with Trudeau and the Royal Commission on Bilingualism, everyone understood how important that was. And it was forgotten, you know, and how dare they—how dare parents not be there fighting for their kids languages, when they already have them and they are going to lose it in school? Instead of acquiring more, they losing it? I find that really offensive. And it's—so disappointing in our school system, it's to let people go richer and leave poorer.

[End of transcript]