Once we begin to think about language, and especially ‘standard’ languages, as constructs ”posited as separate entities at a particular moment in European philosophical and political thought” (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 21), it becomes much easier to understand how LPP evolved as a normative and descriptive activity of ‘counting’ ‘codifying’ and ‘standardizing’ languages as ‘things’, possessed by ‘native speakers’ who had ‘mother tongues’ and who might speak ‘other (named) languages’. Historical linguistic research demonstrated the relationships among Indo-European languages; however, it wasn’t until the development of nation-states in the 18th century that the quasi-mythological notion that a common, named language is a necessary, if not sufficient, requirement for national identity gained traction, and has continued to influence how people think and talk about language/s. The naming and invention of what were, in fact, heteroglossic (and usually locally unnamed) varieties of spoken language in colonized territories in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Australasia and the ascription of shared cultural origins among disparate ethnolinguistic areas in what today is called Europe, was one of the signal legacies of the modernist project of the European empires (see Willinsky 2000). Political philosophers who stipulate normative theories often implicitly assume a particular way of how we ought to think about language(s) in contemporary liberal democratic societies, thereby perpetuating this modernist project, even though such views have been strongly contested by critical theorists and many sociolinguists. In order to demonstrate the continuing effects of the modernist project on conceptions of language and language policy, I will consider the case of Official Bilingualism in Canada, predicated on the deeply entrenched policy of linguistic dualism, that continues to inform and influence public attitudes and perceptions about the role and place of ‘other’ languages and cultures in Canadian society.

Keywords: Canada, language policy, official bilingualism.