The role of multilingual radio stations in the development of Canadian society

- Elena Kaliberda, Carleton University
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Introduction

Radio in Canada, in Europe and worldwide plays an important role in informing the public. The development of multicultural radio is a Canadian phenomenon. The present study is mostly devoted to the status and development of multicultural radio in Canada.

This presentation looks at only one type of media which is radio.
The main research question


What is the role of multilingual radio in Canada in 2042?
The hypothesis

The main hypothesis is that the multilingual radio is still the most reliable source of information for many multilingual Canadians.

The likely hypothesis for a larger research question will be: the multilingual radio will be the most reliable source of information for Canadian society until 2042.

This study makes use of a literature review on radio, statistic data, research interviews, qualitative methods of research.
The first radio in Canada was created in 1921 to listen to American stations. XWA was the first Canadian station (an experimental station run by the Marconi Company in Montréal) and it began its broadcasts in late 1919 and continued them during 1920. In November 1922, the station was assigned the call letters of CFCF—which stood for Canada's First (Vipond 1992). In 1922, 39 licenses were issued to commercial radio stations (but their life cycle was very short) – (Berland 2009, 192)
I. Radio in Canada: Past

In 1924, Canadian National Railway Company (CNR) began opening its own radio stations, and by 1928, it was able to create a network. The company began equipping its trains with radio receivers, which allowed passengers to hear radio broadcasts.

In 1927, the first trans-Canada radio transmission, broadcast from Ottawa on the occasion of the celebration of Canada’s Diamond Jubilee, opened with a rendition of “O Canada”. The performance was broadcast by CNR for railway passengers and local residents. (Berland, 2009 “North of Empire”, p. 105-106)
Radio for passengers of the Canadian National Railroad (Berland, North of Empire, 2009)
Radio for CNR’s passengers and local citizens
I. Radio in Canada: Past

CNR’s radio: Ten Broadcasting Stations extending across Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific.“The train-radio as a triumph of collective will” (Berland, North of Empire, 2009)

During its nine-year existence, Canadian National Railway Company’s Radio provided music, sports, information and drama programming to Canadians. Programming was produced in English, French and occasionally in some First Nations languages, and distributed nationwide through the railway's own telegraph lines and through rented airtime on other private radio stations. (source: www.broadcasting-history.ca)
I. Radio in Canada: Past

In 1932 the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission was formed by the Conservative government of R. B. Bennett.

It was replaced in 1932 by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It took over the regulatory role. Private stations continued to exist and they were allowed to rebroadcast CBC programs (Hallowell, 2004).

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) granted first licence to the first campus radio in 1975 (a campus station based in Winnipeg, Manitoba). The second one was the Carleton University Students’ Association station in Ottawa, Ontario. Both applications were for English-language FM broadcast licences. (Fauteux, 2013, p. 139)

Canada presents a diverse multicultural society historically based on immigration, so that multilingual news services are a necessity in Canada. There are radio stations that broadcast in multiple languages in Canada; they serve various multicultural communities ensuring effective communications and providing for Canadians an opportunity to listen to the news in their own language. “Today nearly 100 percent of Canadians listen to radio each week for an average of around 18 hours” (Berland, 2009, p. 198)

According to Skinner (2012), alternative media are represented by a range of small outlets, including community radio, television and newspapers. Atton (2013) extends the forms of alternative media by including professionalized media and also internet-blogs and websites. Both Skinner (2012) and Atton (2013) believe that alternative media serve specific communities.

My opinion is: the sector of multilingual radio is still not well studied. Radio members still do not know about the existence of other stations. But they are able to build their audiences. Multilingual radio is not always alternative. For instance, the Euronews television channel – transnational and international television channel that broadcasts in 13 languages.
Canada is a country of linguistic diversity. The nation is becoming more and more a multilingual society in the wake of growing numbers of immigrants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French.

In addition to English and French, the 2011 NHS estimated more than 200 languages as mother tongue.

In 2011, 6.8 million Canadians reported one native language neither English nor French.
President of Canadian Association of Journalists Nick Taylor-Vaisey warns that “Canada is loosing the diverse voices that have kept the media landscape interesting and helped bolster a healthy democracy” (CBC News 2016).

James Baxter, the founding editor of iPolitics, in the speech to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of the Parliament of Canada pointed out the necessity to keep the diversity of media and to avoid the concentration of the media ownership in Canada (September 29, 2016)
II. Radio in Canada: Present.
Community radio associations

National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA) founded in 1981 (50 radio members) and Community Radio Fund of Canada (NCRA established in 2008) - Ottawa.

Canadian Ethnic Media Association (CEMA), based in Toronto.


According to Skinner (2012), «historically media regulation in Canada has been somewhat responsive to the development of alternative media.

In the 1970s community radio and Native broadcasting began to be mentioned in broadcasting policy.

1991 Broadcasting Act recognizes community broadcasting as a key element of Canadian system» (p. 37).
Canada’s Broadcasting Act (1991), outlines industry guidelines for portrayal of diversity.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is responsible for administering the Broadcasting Act.

Campus and community Radio policy 2010-499 (CRTC 2010). This document includes rules for obtaining the mandates of the station, criteria of programming.
II. Radio in Canada: Present. Authorities, regulatory bodies

(at the federal level):

1. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of Parliament of Canada;
2. Department of Canadian Heritage (Ministry);
3. Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) – licences;
4. Industry Canada.
The importance of multilingual radio is recognized in the European Union. The European Commission created a radio network (not a television one!) in 2008 in order to broadcast news with the European agenda in national languages across the EU Member States.
European radio network – Map (established in 2008)
II. Radio in Canada: Present.
Existent types of multilingual radio

- Multilingual public radio FM
- Community radio - public radio
- Community – web-radio, devoted to one or few languages
- Religious radio – in various languages
- Campus radio (multilingual programming - since 1975 FM licensing by CRTC, well developed in Canada - musical and cultural interests, Fauteux 2013)
Multicultural radio in Canada (Ontario and Quebec)
II. Radio in Canada: Present.
Founder of CHIN Radio had been the Italian man from Toronto Johnny Lombardi
CHIN radio Ottawa podcasts
It provides programs in 20 languages of the different ethnic groups of immigrants, who live in Canada. Radio station for the first time has appeared on the air in 1966. There is a great potential in growing channels for many other ethnical communities.

- http://www.chinradioottawa.com/index.php/podcast/romanian
II. Radio in Canada: Present.
Variety of types and forms of radio

Public radio, private radio, alternative radio are all currently present in Canada. Among alternative media are radio broadcasting public organizations and private radios:

Irish radio Canada – in English and Gaelic
www.irishradio.ca

Russian radio Megapolis – in Russian
www.megapolis.ca

( Android, iPhone/iPad, Windows Phone)

Radio Tochka Montreal – 24/7 of Russian music
http://www.radiotochka.ca/

Religious programming - on air and in podcast
Voice of Emmanuel - Arabic religious
(both on the air 97.9 FM CHIN radio Ottawa and online)
http://www.voiceofemmanuel.org/
Multicultural media are out-of-priority in recent media reforms. They experience financial issues, lack of advertising and government support.

There are no comprehensive government programs or regulations to support alternative media.

They mostly operate based on work of contributors and volunteers (journalists and producers).

There are only a few active associations of alternative media in some areas.

Research Interview Questions

1. Is the radio the most reliable media and the source of information?
2. What is the role of multilingual radio stations in public information in 21st century?
3. What are the topics that should be broadcast through multilingual radios?
4. Will the multilingual radio be the most reliable source of information for Canadian society until 2042?
List of Experts

The following experts kindly agreed to participate in an interview:

1. Yves St-Onge, a former employee of communication of the National Gallery of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology.

1. A former radio journalist (anonymously).

2. Austin Comerton, Chief producer of the “Irish Radio Canada”, a former producer and host of the Gaelic program at the CHIN radio Ottawa.

3. Steve Frappier, a former Host of the French Canadian Music Show on CHUO FM (University of Ottawa), a former radio media analyst for the Federal Government.
Radio has been *standing well in the current digital redefinition of media*. I have seen the closure and shrinking of so many print and broadcast media. Being *inexpensive to produce*, it can custom content to audiences and *requires only simple technology* to emit and receive.

Its fate is also heavily *related to the automotive industry* (lot of consumption happened while driving) which is nowadays quickly integrating digital data content.

Radio reach has *benefited greatly from the podcast technology*, online and satellite radio broadcasting capacity. Digital technology is closing the gap between foreign broadcasting and local multilingual broadcasting. This will push local multilingual radio content towards *focusing on local content*. 
1. Is the radio the most reliable media and the source of information?
Not necessarily. Reliability of information depends on the source, on the originators i.e. the journalists, not the media itself. There are lots of radio stations which broadcast fake news or unsubstantiated news.

2. What is the role of multilingual radio stations in public information in 21st century?
I believe it is a good tool of integration for newcomers to a country.

3. What are the topics that should be broadcast through multilingual radios?
Same as for any radio or other media: information that help its listeners better understand their environment and possibly act on it.

4. Will the multilingual radio be the most reliable source of information for Canadian society until 2042?
With the large influx of immigrants and refugees in Canada, it might play a positive role and fill the gap. But I am not even sure that radio, as we know it now, will still exist in 2042… or at least, people will listen through the internet, as most of us do now already...
Interview # 3
Austin Comerton, Irish Radio Canada.
Producer of the Gaelic Hour at CHIN radio Ottawa for more than 11 years.

www.irishradio.ca
(personal communication, January 19, 2017, archive of E. Kaliberda)
Irish radio Canada (online radio)

www.irishradio.ca
1. Is the radio the most reliable media and the source of information?
Not necessarily: As with any medium, *the publisher has control over content*. Should the producer have an agenda or particular perspective that they wish to present and promote, the reliability and veracity is questionable.

2. What is the role of multilingual radio stations in public information in 21st century?
Multilingual stations or programming *provide diaspora the opportunity to remain connected to their heritage and origin*. In a multicultural society where one or two languages predominate, the ability to retain a sense of identity can be a struggle for linguistic and visible minorities. In addition, the richness of the cultural fabric of the country of origin can easily be diluted and lost if there is no vehicle to make it easily accessible.
3. What are the topics that should be broadcast through multilingual radios?
Topics should reflect the reality of the listener. There can be a danger to get locked in a time past and nostalgia becomes the norm. Multilingual should provide for the presentation of current affairs in the locality of broadcast, in addition to national and international items. The perspective of an immigrant or linguistic minority often differs from that of the established majority. This is not to imply that the different perspective is contrary or in opposition to the established majority view.

4. Will the multilingual radio be the most reliable source of information for Canadian society until 2042?
Same as 1 above. However, listeners are more likely by 2042 to access their choice of listening over internet services. I would think that by 2042 WiFi will be ubiquitous and usage plans affordable to enable such access on handheld type devices.
Interview # 4
Steve Frappier, a former Host of the French Canadian Music Show on CHUO FM, a former radio media analyst for the Federal Government (personal communication, February 22, 2017 - archive of E. Kaliberda)

AUDIO:
(main ideas)
Q1. According to Frappier, radio has *captured a core audience of people that are faithful to the station*. He believes that in this regards multilingual radio is a good source of information for the audience. People need a reliable source of information and the radio is one of them.
Q2. As Frappier pointed out, *people that moved to Canada need a link to their own community in order to feel that they are part of it and are not isolated*. 
Interview # 4
Steve Frappier, a former Host of French Canadian Music Show on CHUO FM, a former radio media analyst for the Federal Government (personal communication, February 22, 2017 - archive of E. Kaliberda)

AUDIO:
(main ideas)

Q3. According to Frappier, radio should talk about the community, also local news, municipal news, City affairs, about the province, the country, to make people known what the government does for them. It is also a good way for the government to reach the people that feel themselves isolated.

Q. 4. According to Frappier, if Canada increases immigration to the country, more people from different walks of life, different countries, different cultures, different ways of thinking or living will be in the country, and it will be very important to have this source of information. Having many sources is the best option but if somebody does not know other languages the multilingual radio might be the only source of information.

- Reliability of alternative media: Yes and no, it depends on the source of information, i.e., journalists, and not the media. For some people this is the only source of information.

- All interviewees pointed out adaptability of radio to new realities: digitalization of media, economical, globalization.

- Inexpensive production cost in comparison to print media or television.

- Connection to the automotive industry (lot of consumption happened while driving).

- A good tool of integration for newcomers to a new country, it helps its listeners better understand their environment.

- Provides diaspora the opportunity to remain connected to their heritage and origin.

- Multicultural radio provides a good opportunity for the government to reach ethnic communities with specific message or news.
All interviewees pointed out the need of focusing on local content, current affairs in the locality of broadcast, in addition to national and international items. Also multicultural radio should talk about:

- the community;
- local news;
- municipal news;
- city affairs;
- about the province, the country in order to make people known what the government does for them.

(My addition: also, radio is a source of information about crisis situations and terrorism. Producers of CHIN radio Ottawa recently participated in a focus group on how often there are news about the risk of terrorism in radio programming in different languages).

Future radio is on Internet and through “access on handheld type devices”.


Nowadays the number of options for listening to radio is expanding. Live radio broadcasts are available through a radio receiver at home, at work, on the road, through live streams on Internet, live applications for iPhone, iPad and Android mobile devices, etc..

The radio is becoming a digital medium. The life of radio programs is getting longer due to the distribution of podcasts and audio files on Internet, social media such as Twitter or Facebook, and on websites.

There are also web-radios or online radios. Comparing the radio with other media, it also takes much less resources compared to television channels or to print media.
The future of radio is still digital.

There is a new generation of technologies for receiving radio.

The current tendency is the digitalization in Europe: DAB+ perspective (developed in Korea) – analogue to FM spectrum.

There is a Digital Radio Working Group in the UK. According to World Association of Community radio broadcasters, DAB is the core future platform for radio, mostly because it is the standard being introduced by European governments.
Analogue FM. It requires a special radio receiver, now they are already produced by AEG, Sony, Sangean, Denon, Pure, Tecsun. In January 2017, first in the world Norway put all its radio station on DAB and DAB+ spectrum. It is able to broadcast pictures as well. Does it mean a new radio receiver in a car?
CONCLUSION

• Multilingual radio is not a medium of priority in the recent Canadian media reforms.
• The sector of multicultural radio is not well-developed. There are only few associations and no civil organizations to represent their interests to the government.

But a multicultural radio has good perspectives. This conclusion can be explained by the following factors:

• There are different forms of radios: multilingual programming on public radio, community radio, religious radio, campus radio; on the air, web-radio.
• Radio is a reliable source due to the inexpensive production cost and its adaptability to new realities.
CONCLUSION (cont.)

- A good tool of integration for newcomers to a new country.
- It provides diaspora the opportunity to remain connected to their heritage and origin.
- An educational tool for foreign language students and second generation of immigrants. Programs are produced and presented by native speakers.
- Importance of radio is in broadcasting local news, municipal news, about the province and the country.
- Overall, there are three options for radio: live (FM, AM) and digital DMB, web-radio (on Internet).
- The licensing regulation has to be changed due to the introduction of new radio receivers DBA+.
- The multilingual radio will be still the most reliable source of information for Canadian society until 2042.
Thank You!

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