



**Language Matters:
A Policy-Research Seminar on Language Acquisition and Newcomer Integration
Ottawa, October 22, 2009**

Abstracts

Richard Bourhis, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)
Experiencing Discrimination and Linguicism in Quebec and Canada

After defining discrimination and “linguicism”, this paper provides examples of employment problems experienced by visible minorities, allophones and anglophones in Quebec. The paper then provides results from a special analysis of the Ethnic Diversity Survey (2003) dealing with experiences of discrimination and linguicism in Quebec and the rest of Canada (ROC). Results show that in Quebec, anglophones are more likely to report being victims of discrimination than francophones, this being the case especially for visible minority anglophones. Compared to skin colour and cultural background, language/accent is seen as the main cause of discrimination for both francophones and anglophones, attesting to enduring linguistic tensions in the province. In ROC, skin colour is seen as the main cause of discrimination for anglophones and allophones, while francophones see language/accent as the main cause of discrimination. In both Quebec and ROC, discrimination is most likely to be experienced in the work setting followed by public settings such as stores, banks and restaurants. Clearly, linguicism is seen as the main cause of discrimination in Quebec for both francophones and anglophones, while in ROC this is the case only for francophones.

Monica Boyd, University of Toronto
Presentation 1: Immigration Trends, Language Skills and the Labour Market Integration of Recent Immigrants

Using Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s annual flow data and information from the 2006 Canada census, this presentation provides answers to the following two questions: 1) what are the changes over time in the English/French language skills of recent immigrants and how are they linked to the management of Canada’s immigration? 2) What is the relationship between English/French proficiency and labour market outcomes, such as labour force participation, unemployment, part-time work, occupation, weeks worked, earnings and employment in linguistic enclaves? The findings update earlier research, confirming again that low levels of language proficiency in destination country languages are strongly associated with unfavorable labour market outcomes. Because low levels of language proficiency vary by country/region of origin, these outcomes are unevenly experienced by recently arrived immigrants and by those originating from non-European and U.S. countries.

Monica Boyd, University of Toronto

Presentation 2: Joining and Belonging: Language Use and the Civic Participation of Immigrants

This project assesses the relationship between language proficiency and civic participation, comparing immigrant immigrants to the Canadian born. Two core questions are addressed: 1) what are the relationships between language knowledge and the level and type of civic participation within the immigrant population? More specifically, does knowledge and use of English and/or French increase the likelihood of civic engagement by immigrants? 2) Do immigrants, particularly those with low levels of proficiency, differ from the Canadian-born in the type of civic participation? These questions are answered with information from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey and the 2008 General Social Survey (Cycle 22), focusing on rates of associational participation, volunteering, voting, and sense of belonging. The data show that language proficiency is a key variable influencing levels and types of civic participation among the foreign-born.

Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Statistics Canada

Passing on the Ancestral Language / La transmission de la langue ancestrale

Based on data from the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) of 2002, this presentation will discuss the preservation and transmission of ancestral languages in Canada. It examines the extent to which allophone immigrants (that is, those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French) have passed on their mother tongue to their Canadian-born children. In this analysis, the focus is particularly on the factors linked to the probability that a person born in Canada of allophone immigrant parents speaks his/her parents' mother tongue; that s/he is capable of sustaining a conversation in this language, and that s/he uses the language on a regular basis at home.

S'appuyant sur les données de l'Enquête sur la diversité ethnique (EDE) de 2002, l'exposé portera sur le maintien et la transmission des langues ancestrales au Canada. On y examine la mesure selon laquelle les immigrants allophones (c.-à-d. ceux dont la langue maternelle n'est ni l'anglais ni le français) ont transmis leur langue maternelle à leurs enfants nés au Canada. Dans cette analyse, l'accent est mis en particulier sur les facteurs liés à la probabilité qu'une personne née au Canada, de parents immigrants allophones, ait la même langue maternelle que ses parents, qu'elle soit en mesure de soutenir une conversation dans cette langue et qu'elle l'utilise de façon régulière à la maison.

Jim Cummins, University of Toronto

Wanted: A Language Policy for Canada in an Era of Globalization

Canada's only attempt at what might be called a "language policy", the 1971 articulation of the *multiculturalism within a bilingual framework* policy focused on only two of the many languages that are used on a daily basis across Canada. It also failed to articulate in any coherent way how the two official languages relate to the other languages of Canada. Almost 40 years later, at a time when population mobility and intercultural contact is at an all-time high in human history, it is time to reconsider the contributions that multilingualism and multilingual individuals can make to Canadian trade, diplomacy, and peace-keeping. In addition to these "external" contributions, knowledge of additional languages is clearly invaluable in enabling individuals to assist newcomers in settlement into Canada and in enabling Canadian institutions to provide services to immigrant communities. The presentation will sketch why a national policy is needed, what it might look like, and how to implement it.

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, University of Bristol
Language Testing Regimes in Europe

One of the most pressing issues in contemporary European societies is the need to promote integration and social inclusion in the context of rapidly increasing migration. A particular challenge confronting national governments is how to accommodate speakers of an ever-increasing number of languages within what in most cases are still perceived as monolingual indigenous populations. This has given rise to public debates in many countries on controversial policies imposing a requirement of competence in a 'national' language and culture as a condition for acquiring citizenship. However, these debates are frequently conducted almost entirely at a national level within each state, with little if any attention paid to the broader European context. At the same time, further EU enlargement and the ongoing rise in the rate of migration into and across Europe suggest that the salience of these issues is likely to continue to grow. This presentation offers a critical analysis of these debates and emerging discourses on integration and challenges the assumptions underlying the new 'language testing regimes'.

Kenise Murphy Kilbride, Ryerson University
Striving for Voice: Thoughts on language acquisition and integration offered by women who do not yet speak English

This presentation is based on a study that examined the language issues of women in the four largest immigrant groups arriving in Ontario in this decade: speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, and Punjabi. We interviewed women from these communities who were newly fluent in English, service providers who are active in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, and women from the communities who are not yet fluent in English. This presentation looks only at the testimony of the last group, those who had to be interviewed in their first language, to see what their concerns were regarding acquiring English and integrating into Toronto. While integration was not an intended topic of the interviews, it arose again and again as a major concern for women, precisely because they had been unable to obtain access to the English classes they need for integration; the reasons they cited are also presented.

Alanna MacDougall, Ryerson University Graduate
Hearing Audible Minorities: Accent, Discrimination, and the Integration of Immigrants into the Canadian Labour Market

Accent is a permanent marker of difference for learners of a second language, and may be a barrier to finding appropriate employment. Research on discrimination and accent reveals a widespread belief in the myth of a standard, ideal accent. This has resulted in individuals stereotyping accented speakers and drawing inappropriate conclusions about their language ability, leading to discrimination in both the workplace and broader society. A small study of Ottawa companies conducted for this paper supports the hypothesis that some employers may rely on accent to determine an applicant's English proficiency. Accent discrimination can be addressed by providing employers with information about accent and appropriate tools for language evaluation, confronting the reality of accent discrimination with ESL students, and by broadening the discourse on discrimination as a whole to recognise that minorities can be audible as well as visible.

Catherine Murray, Simon Fraser University
Not Another Solitude: Third Language Media Matters

Starting from a multicultural communication model of the community, this paper challenges some of the conventional thinking about third language ethnic media based on a set of media analyses and interviews in four language groups in B.C. How should government communications/media relations strategy, communication and language policy be rethought in a rapidly pluralising culture? How are ethical expectations of intercultural competence and citizen engagement changing in media discourse in Canada today? Examining newcomers and second and third generation ethno-cultural media practices suggests neither basis for despair over separate enclaves nor celebration over a myth of conjoined cultures. Instead, a new pragmatism and entrepreneurialism is emerging, with rapid turnover in the ethnic media sector, but significant innovation and adaptation. The rate of change suggests serious challenges for language training, skill development and venture capital among cultural workers and professionals. It also underlines a growing need for new intercultural communication mechanisms for civic education, managing conflict and reaching reconciliation.

Silma Hudson Roddau, Progress Career Planning Institute
Language Barriers to Employment Faced by Internationally Educated Professionals

Despite the wealth of skills and talent Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) possess, they continue to face a myriad of challenges in entering the Canadian workforce. The perspectives of employers pertaining to the recruitment, retention, integration and advancement of IEPs in their occupational fields were investigated through an exploratory national survey. Paralleling this through an online survey, IEPs were asked to respond to questions similar to those of the employers. The similarities allowed for comparison of the responses which were captured in a 2009 study commissioned by the Progress Career Planning Institute and funded by CIC. It appears that employers' and IEPs' perceptions differ in some instances but the largest differences in their perceptions surround inadequate language skills as a barrier to finding employment. While employer respondents were almost all unanimous in rating language as a serious barrier, only a few IEP respondents perceive themselves as having communication challenges. However, it appears that there may be an uneasiness on the part of employers to give feedback to IEPs on their language skills. The findings revealed that limited language and communications skills among IEPs top the list of barriers. This presentation will highlight questions and responses on language and communication from both employer and IEP respondents and discuss the disconnect in perceptions.

Yves Saint-Germain, Integration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)
Enhancing Language Skill Assessment: Real Results for Newcomers

This presentation will outline CIC's proposal for a language skill assessment system that motivates and empowers newcomers, measures the effectiveness of their training, and provides a recognized, portable credential so that newcomers can demonstrate their achievement to educational institutions, employers and others. The proposed system will consist of two parts: (1) the introduction of language portfolios as a means to assess learners' increasing grasp of both the language and settlement information components of their particular course of study (notably LINC), and (2) a standardized, high-stakes language test to accurately assess the language proficiency of all newcomers wishing to "credentialize" their achievement in language acquisition. The presentation will identify challenges faced by CIC's current assessment regime, describe some of the Department's efforts leading to the current proposal, and indicate how the project might develop in the future.

Parminder Singh, CBC/OMNI TV Toronto

Hockey Night in Punjabi: Connecting Generations, Connecting Canadians

The Punjabi community has been in Canada for over a century now and by 2011, Punjabi will be the fourth most spoken language in Canada, after English, French and Mandarin. In this presentation, Parminder Singh, the Punjabi voice of *Hockey Night in Canada*, will speak about two things. First, he will describe how the Punjabi hockey broadcast – viewed by an estimated 100,000 people, including those who also speak English or French (or both) – has helped to introduce hockey to newcomers, connect generations within Punjabi-Canadian families, and make Punjabi-speaking children feel truly Canadian. Second, based on his work with the Punjabi community, he will speak about their experiences – including successes and challenges – in adopting official languages, maintaining Punjabi, and integrating into Canadian society.

Wendy Swedlove, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council

Occupational Language Analyses Helping Newcomers Integrate into the Tourism Industry

An Occupational Language Analysis (OLA) defines the expected language competency for entry into an occupation. OLAs are based on defined occupational standards and Essential Skills Profiles and contain practical examples to illustrate the language benchmark (reading, writing, speaking skills) required for specific job tasks. The CTHRC first established OLAs in 2006 and works with them to inform workplace training and learner assessment programs. This session will illustrate how OLAs link to CTHRC programs serving newcomers.

Rachel Wernick, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, HRSDC

Understanding the interaction of language, literacy and essential skills - possible policy directions to address the needs of immigrants with low literacy and essential skills

This presentation will examine the interaction of language, literacy and essential skills and its implications for the labour market integration of newcomers to Canada. Data from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS 2003) and the Canadian component of the International Survey of Reading Skills (ISRS 2008) will be used in discussing demographic characteristics of immigrants with low literacy and essential skills. A number of policy and program gaps will be highlighted with a view to stimulate discussion on possible directions to better address the needs of immigrants with low literacy and essential skills.