

Meanings of Quebec's Linguistic Integration Program as Perceived by Recent Immigrants

Education, Socialization, Encouragement, and Personal Development Through Language Courses

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Résumé de l'article

Les significations et les effets des programmes de formation linguistique financés par le gouvernement constituent un sujet de recherche important, car il touche les préjugés potentiels contre les personnes immigrantes et les stéréotypes négatifs, ainsi que les discussions sur l'efficacité des politiques d'intégration des personnes immigrantes en général. Les effets des programmes d'intégration civique sont difficiles à mesurer, et trop peu de recherches visent une telle analyse. En appliquant une analyse quantitative de contenu pour examiner les réponses des 73 personnes ayant participé à un programme d'intégration linguistique, cette étude a identifié les significations les plus essentielles du programme, qui ne peuvent être révélées que par la participation personnelle. Les résultats de cette étude peuvent être utilisés pour évaluer les programmes de formation linguistique offerts aux personnes immigrantes adultes et peuvent fournir des idées sur quels éléments du processus éducatif méritent une attention particulière de la part du personnel enseignant et des employeurs de programmes de formation linguistique.

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Abstract

The meanings and effects of government-funded language training programs is an important research subject because it concerns possible prejudices against immigrants and negative stereotypes as well as discussions on the effectiveness of immigrant integration policies in general. The effects of civic integration programs are difficult to measure, and there is insufficient research devoted to such analysis. This study, by applying quantitative content analysis to examine the responses of 73 participants in a linguistic integration program, found the most essential meanings of the program that can be revealed only through personal participation. The results of this study can be used to evaluate language training programs for adult newcomers and provide ideas on which elements of the educational process should receive special attention from teachers and employers of language programs.

Résumé

Les significations et les effets des programmes de formation linguistique financés par le gouvernement constituent un sujet de recherche important, car il touche les préjugés potentiels contre les personnes immigrantes et les stéréotypes négatifs, ainsi que les discussions sur l'efficacité des politiques d'intégration des personnes immigrantes en général. Les effets des programmes d'intégration civique sont difficiles à mesurer, et trop peu de recherches visent une telle analyse. En appliquant une analyse quantitative de contenu pour examiner les réponses des 73 personnes ayant participé à un programme d'intégration linguistique, cette étude a identifié les significations les plus essentielles du programme, qui ne peuvent être révélées que par la participation personnelle. Les résultats de cette étude peuvent être utilisés pour

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évaluer les programmes de formation linguistique offerts aux personnes immigrantes adultes et peuvent fournir des idées sur quels éléments du processus éducatif méritent une attention particulière de la part du personnel enseignant et des employeurs de programmes de formation linguistique.

Immigration is widespread, which is why many countries are developing civic integration programs for immigrants. The aim of these programs is to facilitate the integration of immigrants into host societies by providing them with basic linguistic knowledge and practical information on the host society as well as on the laws and values of a receiving country (Cantin, 2010; Gibb, 2008; Guo, 2013; Kamenova, 2019) and skills to facilitate their entry to the labour market (Li, 2003). It is therefore not surprising that the effects of these programs on participants are of research interest. The Canadian government has offered second-language training for adult immigrants since 1947 (McDonald et al., 2008). Language training programs play the role of civic integration programs as they focus not only on language skills, but also on Canadian values and training for employment. In Canada, language training is a key component of migrant policy, and the Canadian federal government has a long history of funding English/French-language training programs for immigrants as part of its settlement activities (Boyd & Cao, 2009). Most of these are English as a second language programs (Guo, 2013).

Quebec welcomes thousands of immigrants each year and “it is now becoming a bona fide immigrant society” (Blad & Couton, 2009). The Quebec Ministry of Immigration, Francization and Integration (Le ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration) offers immigrants a linguistic integration program (Francization program) of a total duration of up to 44 weeks. Participation in this program is not compulsory for immigrants, as it is in some European countries (Böcker & Strik, 2011; Gebhardt, 2016; Joppke, 2007; Neureiter, 2019; Triadafilopoulos, 2011). This participation requires attendance in class 5 days a week for 7 hours, including 1 hour for lunch. In the case of COVID-19, the classes have been replaced by online courses, which still involve 6 hours of daily work. As participation in this program is not compulsory, participants can leave it at any time without any consequences, which many do. But others stay. The question is, what makes them stay and find it so beneficial even though such full-time participation is difficult to combine with another educational or professional activity? At first glance, based on the description of the program, it seems like the answer is obvious: the financial support offered by the ministry to all students, as well as the free opportunity to acquire basic French-language skills, is the anchor that keeps students in this program. Such an “obvious” answer can lead to prejudices against immigrants who can be seen as people who attend these courses only for mercantile reasons. However, this external view of the program’s benefits can be biased, since participants can develop their own meanings of such participation.

Previous studies indicate that researchers have little knowledge of the effects of civic integration programs (Goodman & Wright, 2015; Neureiter, 2019) and that policy evaluation attempts to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of general language training programs are undermined by multiple factors, including the lack of descriptions of specific language training programs in publicly available documents (Boyd & Cao, 2009). In addition, studies of the effects of civic integration programs generally consider an external vision of these programs and assess their effects from the point of view of governmental

agencies, external consultants, or research institutes (González Garibay & De Cuyper, 2013), local policy makers (Gebhardt, 2016), or practitioners and experts on immigrant integration policy (Neureiter, 2019), while the point of view of the participants in these programs themselves and the significance of these programs for them have not attracted enough attention. Some studies have analyzed data obtained directly from immigrants. For example, Kaida (2013), using data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, found that participation in English/French-language training helps low-income immigrants exit poverty (Kaida, 2013), and Orlov (2018), using the same data, found that attending English as a second language courses full-time results in an immigrant's salary increase (Orlov, 2018). Renaud & Cayn (2007) found correlation between successful completion of a French course in Quebec and the rate of transition to a skilled job. Neureiter (2019) analyzed the effect of participation in mandatory integration programs on economic, political, and social integration in Western Europe using statistical data collected on immigrants, and concluded that there was a positive effect of their participation in civic integration programs on economic integration. Goodman & Wright (2015) used measures of social, political, and economic integration outcomes based on immigrant responses to standardized multiple-choice and scale questions that allowed for country-level comparative analysis of the effect of these programs. However, these studies using scales and closed questions did not consider the personal opinions of immigrants, which may reveal the meanings of their participation in these programs hidden from an external observer. Böcker and Strik (2011) interviewed immigrants in several European countries and found that they appreciate knowledge of society as well as language proficiency as the results of their participation in language courses. They also found that the psychological effect of these courses is no less important than linguistic progress. However, they did not explain the type of psychological effects enjoyed by program participants. Nonetheless, more detailed information on the benefits of a civic integration program as perceived by its participants will help clarify the reasons why they spend their time in the program if it is not compulsory, and thus promote a better understanding of the needs of immigrants in their integration process and the effects of Canadian immigrant integration programs. This study therefore examines how the benefits of participating in a linguistic integration program are perceived by its participants themselves and, using a quantitative content analysis of responses to open-ended questions, analyzes the perception of these benefits in more detail than previous studies.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. First, it discusses objectives of language courses for newcomers and their expected effects on participants. Then it presents the methodology, discusses the main findings, and ends with the implications of the results and conclusion.

Objectives of Language Courses for Adult Newcomers and Their Expected Effects on Participants

When people arrive in a new country, one of the most striking first impressions is the one they receive during their first formal education. Indeed, formal education often provides the very first regular contact and communication with other people living in the host society. Besides, formal education not only means such obvious benefits as a diploma or certificate, but also poses multiple challenges that require the mobilization of different personal resources: cognitive efforts, communication with unknown people, displacement in an

unfamiliar city in an unfamiliar country, establishing a new daily routine, and maybe many others depending on personal background and previous experiences. Overcoming such challenges inevitably affects and impresses newcomers. And the impressions received during this education can affect the overall impression of the host society and further integration into the host society. The linguistic integration program offered by the Quebec Ministry of Immigration, Francization and Integration provides the very first formal education to many newcomers. This program offers French courses and focuses on knowledge of the French language and its application in everyday life in various contexts, familiarization with values, behavioural attitudes, cultural codes, and the history of Quebec society (Programme d’intégration linguistique pour les immigrants). The officially proclaimed goal of the Francization program is to enable the immigrant

- to communicate in everyday situations and to develop the use of French in contexts of participation linked to social, community, family, and professional life;
- to become familiar with the values, attitudes and behaviours in various areas of Quebec life and to understand the cultural, political, and economic codes of Quebec in order to be able to exercise its rights and responsibilities as a citizen;
- to acquire the linguistic and referential skills necessary to access, maintain, and progress in employment as well as access to vocational training or the pursuit of studies. (Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration, 2021, p. 3)

All these objectives are justified by the undeniable advantages of their acquisition. It is obvious that mastery of the language of the mainstream culture is necessary for proper functioning in a society. Language proficiency is the most important predictor of sociocultural integration (Nakhaie, 2020), and in Canada, language became the main vehicle for the integration of immigrants (Adamuti-Trache, 2012; Millar, 2013). Language constitutes both the medium of everyday communication and a resource, in particular in the context of education and the labour market (Esser, 2006; Huot et al., 2020), and is a fundamental element of the human capital of immigrants that promotes their labour-market outcomes (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Rooth & Saarela, 2007) and increases their sense of belonging to the host society (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). Knowing the language(s) of the host society also improves the capacity to obtain essential information about different aspects of life in the new society, including social programs, employment opportunities, civic and legal rights, etc. (Boyd & Cao, 2009). In addition, language ability has a strong effect on the consumption of domestic cultural products (Akresh et al., 2014), which is essential for integration into the host culture. The importance of language integration along with cultural integration is accentuated by the Canadian government (Winter, 2015). It is therefore not surprising that language skills are the main objective of integration programs for newcomers.

What immigrants wishing to settle in the host society most lack, in addition to the language, is the shared culture of native speakers (Kamenova, 2019). Consequently, “the objective of any process of teaching/learning a foreign language is to go beyond knowledge of the linguistic code and to make learners acquire a communication skill which necessarily involves knowledge of the psychological, sociological and cultural rules of native speakers” (Kamenova, 2019, p. 102). Basic information about adapted cultural rules, laws, and codes in the host society is crucial for newcomers to act in the host community. The knowledge of the use of new cultural schemas leads to better acculturation—i.e., helps to reestablish “chronic

cultural fluency” (Doucerain, 2019)—while the lack of knowledge of social axioms is negatively related to the sociocultural adaptation of immigrants (Kurman & Ronen-Eilon, 2004). The linguistic integration program of Quebec aims to achieve these objectives, the mastery of the language and knowledge of culture, including cultural codes. Consequently, we assume that the French language and information about Quebec society and culture must be two essential benefits perceived by the students of the Francization program.

However, humans need more than skills to feel comfortable in any society. They need others with whom to interact, share their impressions and experiences, and exchange various information. Furthermore, “success of re-establishing a social network in the new society greatly reduces psychological distress and the detrimental effect of uprooting” (Kuo & Tsai, 1986, p. 147). Therefore, an educational program involving personal interactions should benefit newcomers by providing them not only with language skills and knowledge about the culture of the host society, but also social contacts.

Social contacts in general are obviously beneficial. Moreover, adults working together in language classes participate in each other’s development of second-language literacy by being active or passive “knowledge holders” for each other and by generally facilitating the study process (Hardman, 1999). But what is particularly essential for immigrants is the second-language network. Empirical study found that the larger size of the second-language migrant network, higher second-language inclusiveness, and higher second-language density were all associated with lower communication-related acculturative stress (Doucerain et al., 2015, p. 9). This is because greater interconnectedness in migrants’ second-language social network can facilitate the transmission of normative language forms and communicative practices (Doucerain et al., 2015, p. 3). Direct communication with employees and teachers of language courses, on the other hand, allows students to observe the behaviour of people belonging to the host society and thus learn about standards of behaviour. An empirical study has shown that people appear to acquire “their community’s descriptive norm about community engagement” by the experiential route, but not by the conceptual route (Kashima et al., 2013). Social psychologists have found that people learn a great deal simply by watching others behave and imitating what they see (McAdams, 2009, p. 76). And language, like many other complex skills, is acquired in part through the process of observational learning (Whitehurst & DeBaryshe, 1989). Therefore, we assume that students in a linguistic integration program should appreciate both social contacts in general (for communication of friendship and pleasure) and communication with francophones (to develop communication skills in French in real-life situations and learn about social standards).

Involvement in social contacts can affect attitudes toward the host culture. Thus, according to acculturation theories, everyone in intercultural contact holds what are called acculturation attitudes (Berry, 2001)—that is, attitudes toward people belonging to another culture and toward their cultural attributes—and immigrant acculturation strategies are supposed to be linked to their well-being (Berry & Hou, 2016). Analysis of the meanings of the integration program can reveal what type of acculturation strategies the program participants develop.

The Ministry of Immigration, Francization and Integration also offers the program’s students financial support in the form of a weekly allowance. This should also benefit them, since they are usually unemployed and often have no other source of income.

Based on information about the linguistic integration program, before starting this study, I supposed that the mastery of the French language and the financial support are the most appreciated benefits of the program, followed by making friends and socializing and receiving useful information about Quebec society, including local communication rules. However, considering that students can bring their own set of meanings (Henderson-King & Smith, 2006), I assumed that program participants may find non-obvious (to an external observer) meanings of their participation in the program that encourage them to stay in the program and invest their time in this participation, even if it is difficult to combine it with other educational or professional activities. And indeed, participants found many specific benefits that could be revealed only through personal participation, as shown below.

The study also examined whether there are gender differences in the perceived benefits of participating in the program, as men and women may have different expectations and needs in their integration process.

Methodology

Data and Participants

The data for this study were collected in Montreal in 2020. Seventy-three adult immigrants, students of the linguistic integration program, answered two open-ended questions in writing. In the sample were 21 men and 52 women aged 25 to 45 from different Middle Eastern, Asian, and Latin American countries. All participants spent at least 3 months in this program and several months, mostly less than a year, in Canada. This task was part of the educational activities designed to get students to reflect on the experiences they gained while studying in the program and to express their impressions using the language of the host society. Responses were sent and received by email. No personal information, except for gender, was included in this study.

Measures

This study used two open-ended questions designed to uncover the meanings of the program for participants and clarify what prompted them to stay in the program:

1. Describe what were the benefits or advantages of your participation in Francization at the previous levels. What did you get when you attended courses?
2. Explain how the things obtained during your participation in the program can help you in your life.

Answers were given in free form, either as consistent text or more often simply by listing the benefits.

Methods

This study applied quantitative text analysis (content analysis), a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or themes within a given text and designed to help researchers discern patterns, themes, and repetition within and across numerous text documents (Muehlenhaus, 2011). This study used thematic content analysis (Mehl, 2006) to identify thematic references in texts written by participants by counting keyword frequencies in written responses.

The answers to the first question were divided into categories (or themes). In addition to four benefits initially assumed (mastery of the French language, financial support, socializing and making friends, and useful practical information on Quebec society), participants added several other types of benefits that were not expected before this study.

The new categories were created from the keywords used by the participants. For example, many participants mentioned that they could now communicate more easily with others, using different expressions such as “I know how to start and end a conversation” or “I can practise communicating with teachers.” All responses related to the facilitation of communication were grouped under the category “removing language barriers and facilitating communication with others.” Many participants also mentioned that they like the way people communicate in the program by using the words “teachers” and “employees” in the same sentences as words such as “sympathetic,” “good,” “helping,” “excellent,” “professional,” etc. All these responses were grouped under the category “learning the local communication style by communicating with teachers and employees of the program.” Some of the participants used words related to incentives, such as “confidence,” “encouragement,” etc. to describe the benefits of their participation in the program. All these responses were grouped under the category “incentives.” Other categories were created in the same way.

The answers to the second question had only four categories: finding a job, integrating into the host society, helping children with homework, and studying at university or college.

For each participant, all the categories mentioned in their answer have been indicated—for example, participant 1 mentioned such and such categories, participant 2 mentioned such and such categories, etc. After identifying the categories mentioned by all participants, the number of participants who mentioned each category was calculated and descriptive statistics were produced.

Findings

The results of this study reveal the most essential meanings of participation in Quebec’s linguistic integration program as perceived by its participants. The hypothesis that the greatest benefits of the program are language skills, financial support, increasing social capital, and acquisition of useful information has been only partially confirmed. The substantial part of this hypothesis, concerning the greatest importance of the allowance, was not confirmed: only 5.5% of the participants mentioned this. Although everyone receives this allowance, when asked what the most important benefits are of participating in the program, most participants first thought of other things. The benefits of participating in the Francization program mentioned by participants are of different types, and they are arranged as follows, from most often mentioned to least mentioned (see Table 1):

1. develop skills (proficiency in French, including practical use of this language in different real-life situations, and computer skills)
2. overcome the psychological barrier in the use of the foreign language (French) (remove the language barrier and facilitate communication with others in French)
3. increase social capital (make friends and socialize in communications with teachers, colleagues and program administration staff)
4. learn the local communication style by communicating with teachers and Francization employees

5. get incentives and positive emotions (become more confident, get encouragement, be interested)
6. get information (get to know the local culture; get useful practical information about Quebec society, such as laws and rules, infrastructure, or local leisure activities; get information about the different places and activities in Montreal during organized outings)
7. advance in personal development (develop respect for time and punctuality; get involved in teamwork; acquire a learning experience, such as the ability to concentrate and ask questions; get autonomy)
8. obtain material support (receive financial support, such as an allowance; use the facilities of the college where they took their courses, such as the swimming pool, gymnasium, or library)

These responses show that the linguistic skills and the ability to communicate in French, followed by social capital and psychological support, are the most appreciated benefits of the program. Information on Quebec society and its culture as well as personal development are also considered to be important beneficial results. The material support is valued, but less than the non-material benefits. These results provide insight into the hidden or non-obvious meanings of the linguistic integration program, which are obvious to its students, but hardly to external observers. They also reveal the things most valued by immigrants when adapting to a new society: language skills, communication skills (including overcoming the language barrier and learning the local communication style), social capital, and emotional incentives and support. Among the benefits indicated by the participants, skills, new information, and personal development are the meanings that can be found in any educational program, due to the very nature of education itself. However, in addition to this, the linguistic integration program also offers other benefits, such as gaining confidence and receiving encouragement, that are considered among the greatest benefits by program participants. These benefits are mentioned more often by women than by men. Böcker and Strik (2011), in interviews with immigrants from several European countries, also found that the psychological effect, namely the emancipatory effect, in particular for women, is an essential advantage acquired through participation in language courses. Unlike previous studies, this research not only reveals that positive incentives are highly valued by language program participants, but also shows that they are valued more than such obvious benefits of the program as practical information about the host society and material support. Positive incentives are crucial for adults who must adapt to an environment that is often completely unknown. Therefore, this advantage indicates one of the basic needs of adult immigrants.

The results show that there was almost no difference between the responses of men and women on the importance of benefits such as mastery of French, elimination of the language barrier, and learning the local communication style (Table 1). However, women more than men appreciated benefits such as psychological incentives and personal development. Financial support was also mentioned more by women than by men. Men mentioned benefits such as making friends and socializing more often than women. This can probably be explained by the fact that in the participants' societies of origin, communication with new people is considered more appropriate for men than for women. Nevertheless, the

results show that in general, both men and women like to develop social contacts during their language training.

Table 1: Benefits of the Francization Program as Perceived by Students

Rating	Responses	Total frequency (<i>n</i> = 73) and % (73 = 100%)	% Women (52 = 100%)	% Men (21 = 100%)
1.	mastery of the French language	64 (87.7%)	84.6	95.2
2.	remove the language barrier, facilitate communication with others	42 (57.5%)	59.6	52.4
3.	making friends, socialization	36 (49.3%)	44.2	61.9
4.	learning the local communication style by communicating with teachers and employees of Francization	28 (38.4%)	34.6	47.6
5.	receive incentives			
	get confidence	16	23.1	19.0
	get encouragement	8	11.5	9.5
	feel proud to learn French	2	3.8	0.0
	get a new superpower	1	1.9	0.0
	total	27 (37.0%)	40.3	28.5
6.	get to know the local culture	22 (30.1%)	30.8	28.6
7.	personal development			
	respect for time and punctuality	7	11.5	4.8
	teamwork	5	7.7	4.8
	learning experience	2	1.9	4.8
	promotion of autonomy	1	1.9	0.0
	Don't hesitate to ask questions	1	1.9	0.0

Rating	Responses	Total frequency (<i>n</i> = 73) and % (73 = 100%)	% Women (52 = 100%)	% Men (21 = 100%)
	total	16 (21.9%)	24.9	14.4
8.	information on Quebec society (laws, rules, practical information)	13 (17.8%)	19.2	14.3
9.	practical use of the French language (read announcements, letters)	12 (16.4%)	17.3	
10.	interesting	10 (13.7%)	9.6	23.8
11.	see Montreal during outings (sorties)	7 (9.6%)	7.7	14.3
12.	practical knowledge (how to go to the pharmacy, take metro, etc.)	6 (8.2%)	11.5	0
13.	receive allowance	4 (5.5%)	7.7	0
14.	develop nonlinguistic skills (IT)	4 (5.5%)	5.8	4.8
15.	use the facilities of cégep (sports complex)	2 (2.7%)	1.9	4.8
16.	get a certificate	1 (1.4%)	0	4.8

The answers to the second question (Explain how the things obtained during your participation in the program can help you in your life.) contained fewer elements, but included major challenges for adult newcomers: finding a job, integrating into the host society, helping children with homework, and studying at university or college (Table 2). An empirical study has indeed found that professional success is seen as a key pathway to inclusion by Canadian immigrants (Moffitt et al., 2020), and in our study, more than a third of the participants mentioned finding a job as a desired outcome of their participation in the program. “Integrate into the host society” was also mentioned by almost a third of the participants. This response reveals the *motivation* and *intention* of participants to integrate into their host society, whatever they mean by this. In fact, participants mentioned it by answering an open-ended question. This means that they think of integration first when they think about the most valuable benefits of their full-time, often tiring, educational activity. Such a response can also be considered as the result of their participation in the

linguistic integration program, which supports or can even create and increase an intention of integration into the host society among newcomers by offering information on the host society, local values, and communication style and providing emotional support. This effect of the program could be considered positive for the well-being of immigrants because integration is more conducive to well-being and success than other styles of acculturation, such as marginalization or assimilation in the societies that welcome immigrants (Mesquita et al., 2017). Integrationist attitudes predicted better psychological adaptation in a multicultural society (Berry, 2001), which is Canadian society. Berry and Hou (2016), based on Statistics Canada data, confirmed that the integration strategy (in their case, a strong sense of belonging to both the host society and the society of origin) was by far the most preferred strategy for Canadian immigrants, compared to other strategies, as it contributes more to their life satisfaction and well-being. Thus, one of the strongest effects of the linguistic integration program is to stimulate the participants' desire to be part of their host society by acquiring the skills and information offered by the program.

In response to the second question, some participants indicated that a positive result of their participation in the program was that they obtained the opportunity to help children with their homework. Helping children with homework is particularly important for women: among eight responses, there were seven responses for women and one for men (Table 2). This can be explained by the traditional role of women in many immigrant families to care for children. This response also indicates one of the most appreciated effects of the program—the possibility of using the skills acquired in the program in daily practice.

Table 2: Practical Use of Benefits Received During the Francization Program

Rating	Responses to the question “Explain how the things obtained during your participation in the program can help you in life.”	Frequency (n = 73) and % (73 = 100%)	% Women (52 = 100%)	% Men (21 = 100%)
1.	find a job	25 (34.2%)	40.4	19.0
2.	integrate into the host society	23 (31.5%)	34.6	23.8
3.	help children with homework	8 (11.0%)	13.5	4.8
4.	study at university or college	7 (9.6%)	9.6	9.5

Civic integration is usually considered to be the acquisition of a standard set of things—the language of the mainstream culture, knowledge of the host country, and knowledge of the fundamental values of the host society—and civic integration programs are designed to achieve these goals. This study shows that benefits that immigrants could derive from such programs go far beyond this traditional standard set: psychological support, incentives, and personal development, as well as the practical usefulness of the skills and knowledge acquired, are also seen as essential benefits by program participants. These results clarify the motivation of participants to stay in the program even if it takes a lot of time and effort.

The main findings of the study can be summarized in three points. First, the main benefits of participating in the program as perceived by its participants are language skills

and socialization in the broad sense (finding friends, personal development, knowing the cultural codes of the host culture). Second, the effects of the program have several dimensions. Language skills are not the only things that should be measured to assess these effects. Other considerations should include increasing social capital, obtaining psychological support and encouragement, and developing personal skills according to the demands of the host society (such as punctuality, ability to work in a team, autonomy, activity). Third, in their process of integration during the first months in the host society, immigrants greatly appreciate the possibility of communicating for different purposes—to start navigating social relationships in the host society and to receive psychological and informational support from others. Thus, the study can conclude that social support in various forms is an essential part of the integration process.

Implications

There are two main applications of the results of this study. First, these results could be used to assess the effectiveness of Quebec’s linguistic integration program, a crucial element of Quebec’s immigrant integration policy. The findings of this study demonstrate that all elements of the official objectives of this program appear in participants’ responses: they indicated the mastery of the French language and its use in various situations, as well as the acquisition of knowledge about Quebec society as important benefits they have obtained during their training in the program. More than a third of them indicated that the knowledge acquired during the program will help them find a job or continue their professional studies in Quebec. Incentives and positive emotions, social capital, self-development, and nonlinguistic (IT) skills are among the main benefits of the program, as assessed by its participants. Thus, the findings of this study are that the wide-ranging benefits really make the Francization program an integration program, and much more than a linguistic one.

The second application is educational. The results of this study show that learning the local communication style and local culture are among the most appreciated benefits of participating in the linguistic integration program. Thus, this element of the educational program should receive special attention and be reinforced by the teachers’ awareness of its significance, since it is the teachers who are supposed to be cultural transmitters in such a program (Kamenova, 2019). The results also demonstrate the importance of positive incentives and emotional support for program participants. This can provide ideas on which elements of the educational process should receive special attention from teachers and employers of language programs.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the benefits of Quebec’s linguistic integration program, a civic integration program designed for adult immigrants, as perceived by its participants to determine what keeps them in the program even though it takes a lot of time and effort and is difficult to combine with other educational and professional activities. To do this, the study analyzed the answers to two open-ended questions asking participants to describe the benefits of the program and explain how things obtained during their stay in the program can help them in life. The results show that among the most appreciated advantages of this participation are skills development (mastery of the French language), obtaining information on Quebec society and culture, increasing social capital, receiving

incentives and positive emotions, and personal development. The study shows that the expected effects and meanings of the program based on the analysis of the objectives and the description of the program do not include all the possible effects and meanings that the participants may achieve. The essential part of the meanings of the program can be revealed only through personal participation. Therefore, participants' own descriptions of these meanings provide unique information that is otherwise inaccessible. Revealing the hidden effects of a linguistic integration program, this study contributes to the analysis of the integration of immigrants by identifying the essential elements of the integration process as proclaimed by the immigrants themselves. It also describes a possible way to measure the effectiveness of civic integration programs and suggests a desirable increase in some elements of integration programs for adult newcomers.

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