Literacy and Heritage/International Languages in Quebec: An Overview

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Immigration: Bringing the World to Canada

Workshop: Family Literacy and the New Canadian

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The context

Characteristics of Quebec immigration

2010: 53,985 immigrants in Quebec

9.1% more than 2009 (49,488)
Who are the newcomers in Quebec?

Young immigrants less than 25 yrs old = 31% of the total

25-34 yrs old = 38%

Gender: almost equal between men and women
- 50.6% men and 49.4% women

Birthplace
- North Africa = Main place of birth of immigrants in 2010 (23.5%)
- Compared to 2009: Increase of immigrants from Africa (mostly North Africa, West Africa and East Africa)
- Decrease of immigrants born in South-East Asia, but increase from East Asia and West & Central Asia
## Heritage languages in Montreal (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Greater Montreal</th>
<th>Quebec</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
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<td>Armenian</td>
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<td>Polish</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heritage languages in Montreal (2006)

• Increase in the allophone population since 1986

• Rapid growth of ethnocultural groups whose heritage language is:
  • Italian
  • Arabic
  • Spanish
  • Creole
Family literacy in Quebec

- Why is family literacy important in our society?
  - Impact on job, health and civil participation
- Low level of literacy of Quebec population means:
  - They cannot read newspapers, information about products, etc.
  - They cannot fully contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of the society
  - They cannot reach a better quality of life
  - They cannot help their family and children to develop themselves
Mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children’s abilities in the majority school language.

Cummins (2001)

Bilingual children perform better in school when the school effectively teaches the mother tongue and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language.
Family literacy at school

• Project of “Storysacks”: initiative originated in Great Britain and has much success

• Objective:
  - Bring the school and family together
  - Support and encourage family literacy activities in French, while valuing heritage languages

• This project is particularly unique for disadvantaged and ethnic settings
“Storysacks”

The student brings at home a bag containing:

- A story album in French
- One or more translations of the story (available in 9 languages)
- A recording of the story on CD, in French and other languages
- Play equipment designed by parents, members of the school team or people from the community
Heritage languages in Quebec

• Speaking another language may be sometimes considered as a brake to the development of the ability to read French, but

• Many studies show that a diversified experience in literacy before starting school, and in any language, allows a better start in writing
Development of family literacy

Appreciation of heritage language

- Allows families to feel accepted in their culture
- To come closer to the child’s school and experience
- Motivates the students to learn heritage language
- Sharing experiences
- Every member of the school team has a role to play in the integration of parents and students
Role of the school team

• Role of the regular teacher in connecting students with their culture while living in a majority language and culture

• Do not neglect the influence of heritage language on learning French as well as aspects of identity and motivation (Anderson, 2002)
Role of parents

• Key role and in the heart of intercultural exchange: it is within the family that children begin to learn and use their heritage language, whether with parents, grandparents or other members of family.
Role of students

• Everything must be put in place to promote their academic achievement
Conclusion

• Acknowledgment and enhancement of skills in order to benefit children's school achievement
• Active support to parents during pedagogical interventions
THANK YOU !

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