

Examining Language Learning Programs for Adult Immigrant and Refugee Learners
in Canada for Quality Improvement

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Abstract

This major academic report (MAR) focuses on learning experiences in the main language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees' integration in Canada. Under the Canadian Immigration Policy, Canadian federal and provincial governments have created and delivered numerous educational programs through public and private institutes to adult immigrant and refugee language learners. Among these programs, new immigrants and refugees usually choose to enroll in language learning programs upon their arrival. Based on my experience as a learner and an instructor in one of the most representative language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees in Quebec, I questioned the extent to which these language learning programs meet immigrant and refugee learners' learning needs. In this research, I investigated this question through the lens of adult learning and transformative learning theories. I relied on a literature review and synthesis to define the unique identity of adult immigrant and refugee learners as well as their position of learning in the field of adult education. In this major academic research paper, I also discuss the factors that affect adult immigrants and refugees' language learning process and present recommendations for improving the quality of these programs in practice.

Keywords: language learning programs, immigrant learning, adult learning, transformative learning, integration

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Introduction

My family and I moved to Canada nine years ago. Like most immigrants, I spent my first two years improving my French and exploring Canadian culture and society as well as getting necessary certificates for finding a job related to my profession. My integration journey began in a Francization French Learning class in Montreal. The Francization program is funded and operated by the Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion of Quebec (MIDI), and delivered by various private or public institutes (partners of MIDI). The mission of the Francization program is to facilitate integration through French learning courses and foster the full participation of immigrants in the collective life in Quebec. However, when I was studying in the program, I often felt uncomfortable with some of the course content, class settings, and activity arrangement in the class. I finally quit the program after two months of full-time study only because of the poor learning outcomes that I had achieved. I then turned to a French course in a private language school and quickly reached the level of working proficiency. I knew there were many other learners who experienced similar situations in the Francization program.

Soon after, I started working as an instructor in an integration course that was part of the Francization program serving new adult immigrant and refugee learners in language learning. I again encountered the issues related to the course content, program management, and other factors that I once worried about as a learner. When my role became an instructor, on one hand, I felt frustrated to witness my immigrant students who struggled in their learning process as I used to. On the other hand, I also felt helpless when I attempted to improve my practice in such situation. I became concerned that a government funded and organized program that has access to the top-level resource in Quebec and costs \$74.5 million yearly (Canada Census, 2017) could not better serve its learners and support its instructors.

Moreover, I also wondered how other similar language learning programs fared across Canada.

In light of this, I chose immigrants and refugees' learning experience in language learning programs for the purpose of integration in Canada as my research focus. Through conducting a review and synthesis of literature, my hope was that this study would provide answers to the questions that I have had since the beginning of my immigration integration journey. Furthermore, I also expected that the recommendations provided in this study will be helpful for the program managers and instructors as well as other stakeholders towards improving the quality of the program in practice.

This report starts with my review of the context of adult immigrants' and refugees' language learning programs in Canada. Then, I discuss the two theoretical frameworks used as the basis of this study: adult learning theory and transformative learning theory. This section is followed by the findings of the research in alignment with its theoretical framework. I then present the recommendations generated from the review and synthesis of the literature and rooted in my reflection on my experiences in the Francization program. I conclude with some thoughts on the factors that play tremendous roles in adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning process in language learning programs that include my expectations on how to make a better version of the language learning programs for adult immigrant and refugee learners in their integration journey.

Research Context

Canada has long maintained one of the highest per capita immigration rates in the world (CIC, 2017). Such high rate demands investing great efforts and resources in the settlement and integration of newcomers, particularly, the investment on official languages education. Many researchers emphasized that learning the official language of the host country is crucial for a successful immigration journey (Galiev & Masoodi, 2012; Ghadi et al.,

2019; Guo, 2013) since language proficiency is not only the key factor to accessing the host country's labour market, but also an important tool for familiarizing newcomers with the values, cultures, and lifestyles of the host society (MIDI, 2016).

In Canada, a variety of language learning programs actively serve adult immigrants and refugees at provincial and national levels; the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and its French version, Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC), Enhanced Language Training (ELT), and the Francization programs in Quebec are the main active language learning programs across Canada. The ELT is considered as the supplement of the LINC to meet the employment-related learning needs, and the CLIC program is un-sizeable for studying (CIC, 2012). Therefore, the LINC program (English) and the Francization program in Quebec (French) as two main active language learning programs were examined in this study. In addition, considering the immigration pattern has changed because of the large number of refugees arrived in Canada in recent years, a few small language training projects only offered to refugees in Alberta, Vancouver and Saskatchewan were also reviewed in order to achieve a more comprehensive vision of the immigrants and refugees' learning experience.

Because of my personal learning and teaching experience in one of the language learning programs, I was deeply related to the issues and concerns that discussed by the immigrant and refugee learners and researchers. For instance, Magro and Ghorayshi (2010) addressed critical issues in language learning classes by presenting one of the participants' comment in their research: "I am a professional.... You know they put me with people who could not read and write in their own language. This affected my mood" (p. 97). I was in an exactly the same learning environment when I studied in the Francization program. And it was not an individual case. In the program I used to work for, students who had Master's or

Doctoral degrees and students who had never gone to school in their lives studied in the same class.

In other research, Derwing and Waugh (2012) analyzed the factors that affect second language acquisition in the context of immigrants' language learning. One of the factors that the authors brought up was the impact of the linguistic and cultural differences in immigrants' language learning process. The authors concluded that the great gap between Mandarin speakers and Slavic-language speakers' achievement in the LINC program was mainly caused by the longer linguistic and cultural distance that Asian-language speakers faced. In my experience, this is one of the main factors that influence immigrant and refugee learners' language learning outcomes however was generally overlooked by program operators when setting the learning environment.

Research Questions

The main research question in this major academic research is: "To what extent do language learning programs in Canada for adult immigrants and refugees meet its learners' learning needs?" This main question led to the following sub-questions:

- What are the unique factors in the learning process of immigrant and refugee adult learners compared to adult learning in general?
- How do these factors affect the learning of adult immigrant and refugee learners?
- How can the language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees include these factors in program planning, delivery, assessment, and other aspects of the program management in practice to improve the quality of the programs?

Research Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning experiences in language learning programs for the purpose of integration in Canada in order to reveal the learners' learning needs as well as to investigate the advantages and

disadvantages/problems in the programs and to develop recommendations that will help instructors and program managers in these language learning programs for improving their practice. With this study, I also aimed to discover the distinguishing factors of adult immigrant and refugee students and their learning process compared to adult learning in general. Furthermore, I intended to locate adult immigrants learning in the field of adult education.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by adult learning theory and transformative learning theory.

Adult Learning Theory in Immigrant and Refugee Learning

I believe that learning is creating meaning from experience, particularly for adult learners. According to Candy (as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014), adult learning “is a process of negotiation, involving the construction and exchange of personally relevant and viable meanings” (p. 37). Taken in this sense, not only prior life and learning experience, but also post-immigration life and learning experience of adult immigrants and refugees should be seen as key factors in learning, which eventually becomes a part of their life experience that determines their life meanings as human beings in the host society.

On the other side, as an immigrant myself, I see the identity of being an immigrant/refugee as unique and affecting how and why I learn things, particularly in learning the official languages of the host country. As Guo (2013) explained, “learning for immigrants and refugees becomes part of the being, living” (p. 322). Moving into a new country means dealing with every aspect of their lives in an unfamiliar environment: language, employment, housing, social service, etc. These immense changes provide the impetus as well as a lot more barriers to their effective learning. It is not difficult to imagine the complexity of adult immigrant and refugee learners’ characteristics when referring learning as compared to general adult learners’ traits.

Moreover, adult learning theory considers the prior learning and life experience of adult learners as the foundation of adult learning which plays an important role in the process of program planning and other steps of program operation, which decides whether the programs planned are able to meet the learners learning needs (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Taking the unique learning characteristics of adult immigrant and refugee learners into consideration, I believe that in the context of adult immigrant and refugee learners' plights, previous learning and life experience is more complicated than adult learners in general and deserves greater attention in language program planning, instruction and evaluation arrangement as well as other aspects of teaching and learning process in order to facilitate authentic learning.

Transformative Learning for Integration

The language learning programs reviewed in this major academic research all confirmed that language education is the key strategy of facilitating integration for adult immigrants and refugees into Canadian society. As a federally funded program, the Language Instructions for Newcomer to Canada (LINC) provides basic language training and knowledge of Canada, according to CIC (2011), LINC as the key strategic objective of the settlement program, aims to support the successful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship. In Quebec, MIDI (2010) announced that the Francization program "better meet its learners' needs at various steps in the process of integration into Quebec society, and to enable newcomers to become active citizens more quickly in a society where French is the official language" (p. 2). These stated missions revealed that the language learning programs in Canada for the purpose of better integration not only carried the function of official language training but also shouldered the mission of promoting change through education for new immigrants and refugees which deeply aligned with the nature of transformative learning theory.

Because I believe that learning is making meaning from experience, the essence of transformative learning as stated in Merriam and Bierema (2014) resonates with me the most. The authors recognized that transformative learning deeply associates with the meaning making process of adult learners (p. 84), which provides the perspective to understanding adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning process. No matter how educators name the challenges these learners confront, Mezirow (1978) called them disorienting dilemmas, defined as adult learning barriers. The journey of their learning is bound to bear the weight of making change in every aspect of their life.

Research Methodology

This study is rooted in my reflection on my learning and working experience in one of the language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees in Quebec. As an individual learner, when facing the unsatisfied learning outcomes in the program, my practical solution was to quit from the program and turn to other effective ones for my learning success. However, when my role became an instructor within the program and its system, the position of power that I gained and the responsibility that I spontaneously took motivated me to seek an inquiry-based solution to improving the situation.

I define this study as a descriptive research that accurately and systematically defines characteristics, trends and categories of a problem using a wide range of quantitative and qualitative methods (Lans & Voordt, 2002, p. 53). In this study, in order to develop a better understanding of language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees in Canada as well as the specific situations that involved in such programs, including program planning, instruction, program management, learning outcomes, and learners' needs, both quantitative and qualitative data from relevant studies were reviewed.

Yet, as I stated previously, I believe learning involves creating meaning from experience, particularly for adult immigrant and refugee learners. Thus, I placed more

emphasis on qualitative information than quantitative findings as the nature of qualitative study is to uncover the acknowledge through understanding the experience that constructed from social reality (Merriam, 2009). This translated into a systematic review of studies that were conducted on these programs and analysis of related publicly available documents as it is further explained below.

Methods

A systematic literature review was conducted in this study. According to Cornin et al., (2008), establishing a clearly defined research question is an essential component of the systematic review process, in which the precise criteria including the number of documents and the time frame of the publications also should be adopted to select and access the literature. Unlike traditional reviews, a systematic literature review focuses on identifying, comparing, contrasting, and critically analyzing the selected body of literature on the research topic, making recommendations, and connecting researcher's practice to the study (p. 39). Moreover, researchers should not only look into what the selected data discusses, but also identify what are the gaps or untouched areas on the subject. In other words, to generate solutions based on the review and analysis of the selected sources.

Research Procedure

By rigorously respecting the pre-designed inclusion criteria as outlined below in Table 1, I collected 27 articles and documents mainly from ProQuest and SAGE databases. Since this study focused on language learning programs funded by federal and provincial governments, data from Canada Census and Publications Quebec was also included. I also used Google Scholar and a few online websites to collect complementary information. Following Cornin et al.'s (2008) process of systemic literature review and guided by advice from my MAR supervisor, seven steps were carried out in the process of this systematic review:

- Step 1: Identified and collated scholarly literature and publicly available documents and materials related to the research questions;
- Step 2: Selected literature and other materials according to the inclusion criteria;
- Step 3: Organized collected literature and materials by themes, which included learners' learning needs, program planning and management, quality of program teaching/instruction, learners' learning experiences, and recommendations for program improvement, etc.;
- Step 4: Compared and analyzed findings for each study;
- Step 5: Synthesized the findings for each study;
- Step 6: Interpreted the findings across the studies; and finally,
- Step 7: Provided recommendations

Table 1*Criteria for Inclusion/Selection of Scholarly Publications and Public Documents*

Criteria	Includes
Date	Studies conducted since 2010
Topic	Immigrant integration; Immigrant language learning; Canadian immigration policy on integration; Francization program in Quebec; Immigrant education; Immigrant learning; Immigrant learning needs; Immigrant learning outcomes
Location	Canada, particularly Quebec
Context	Immigrant Education
Publications	Primary source; Secondary source; Theoretical; Peer reviewed articles; Grey literature, reports, conference proceedings
Databases	Canada Census; EBSCO Academic; Google Scholar; ProQuest Journals; Publications Quebec; Online websites as relevant; SAGE Publishing

Ethical Considerations and Research Limitations

I recognized that my own experiences and history with the Francization program and learning language as an immigrant to Canada would influence how I approach an analysis of the literature and the reporting of results. As Simon (2011) stated, bracketing is an effective technique to mitigate the previously held assumptions that could influence research objectivity. Therefore, in order to minimize my researcher's bias, to increase my awareness of the effectiveness of my prior experiences and knowledge of the research subject, to put aside my former assumptions, and to look into the research topic with a more open mind, I adopted bracketing as the strategy in the process of literature review and synthesis. In this sense, I reviewed and analyzed a large number of relevant documents by following the rigorous selection criteria, which to a great extent ensured a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the research topic and helped to obtain a "non-participating" role in the process of research (Simon, 2011, p. 27).

Two limitations to this study are worth noting. Firstly, as immigrant learning is a complex topic, so is adult learning. Deriving accurate findings depends on a full-scale review and synthesis of a great number and types of documents, which is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, during my research, I mainly focused on the most representative language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees, one in English and one in French. The data collected from the limited resource might not be able to illustrate a completed image of adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning experience in language learning programs.

Secondly, due to the limited published research that focused on one of the two examined language programs, the Francization program, the data and the analysis were mainly based on the results published in Leclerc (2017), a report of the Auditor General of Quebec to the National Assembly for 2017 to 2018, and other relevant information from various resources, such as news reports and the perspectives from stakeholders, which might

not have a comprehensive understanding of the program. Such limitations demonstrate that future in-depth evaluations on Canadian language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees, particularly the Francization program, including class observation, curriculum and instruction examination, and assessments on program management are imperative. Moreover, future surveys focusing on exploring the perspectives of adult immigrant and refugee learners in these programs across Canada is highly recommended. In addition, how to involve cultural differences in developing and managing these programs also need to be studied.

Literature Review

Immigrant education and integration has been a hot topic in Canada; many researchers have conducted studies that focused on different aspects of such topic (Adamuti-Trache, 2013; Fanerjee & Verma, 2012; Flynn et al., 2011, Guo, 2013; Kim, 2013). This study was designed to explore adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning experiences in language learning programs for the purpose of better integration in Canada. With the guidance of adult learning theory and transformative learning theory, the identified literature and materials focused on two main language learning programs: the LINC program (English) and the Francization program in Quebec (French).

I started from reviewing literature centred on the relationship between language learning and integration of adult immigrants and refugees in Canada, and how the understanding on the relationship affects the operation of these language learning programs. I then moved on to the documents that discussed the unique identity of adult immigrant and refugee learners as well as the factors that affect their language learning. Finally, I examined the documents discussing the oft-mentioned issues and suggested solutions from the perspectives of adult immigrant and refugee learners and other stakeholders in these language learning programs as revealed in the reviewed literature.

Integration Starts from Learning the Language

Language proficiency is important for integration in the opinions of many researchers. Adamuti-Trache (2013) defined immigrant integration as “a process of economic and social inclusion of newcomers. It is assessed by the amount and type of practices that individuals conduct in various fields of society such as labor market, education, and civic life” (p. 109). Adamuti-Trache pointed out that by acquiring proficiency in Canada’s official languages, new immigrants and refugees become familiar to the social norms and establish ties with local communities and gradually grow a sense of belonging to Canada. From the author’s perspective, language proficiency is the entrance to the integration journey. Derwing and Waugh (2012) examined a series of studies that addressed immigrants and refugees’ social integration by examining their linguistic proficiency and the status of their integration within different time frames upon their arrival in Canada. They concluded that language proficiency greatly affects the effectiveness of the integration and a lack of linguistic proficiency may explain adult immigrants and refugees’ limited engagement in participating in the host society, which caused difficulties in the process of integration. On the other hand, Adamuti-Trache (2013) also presented the perspectives of immigrant and refugee learners on how important learning official languages to newcomers. The author stated that almost all immigrants (95%) believed it was important or very important to be proficient in official languages. Knowing the official languages of the host country brings not only the pragmatic knowledge that immigrants and refugees need in their daily lives but also provides the access to cultural awareness and identity reconstruction.

Identity development, as one of the most important dimensions of examining the effectiveness of immigrants and refugees’ integration, was also discussed by Ghadi et al. (2019). Through in-depth interviews and observation, the authors studied Syrian refugees’ learning experiences in the language learning program in Saskatchewan as well as their

journey of developing a new identity. The authors analyzed how learning or not learning official languages can influence Syrian refugees' identity development as well as facilitate or hinder their integration in Canada. They argued that official language proficiency provides its holders the "significant economic and social opportunities ...learning the dominant language becomes a vital source for reshaping refugees' lives and reconstructing their identities" (p. 72). Magro and Ghorayshi (2010) also emphasized the importance of language proficiency to integration. The authors stated that the school or to say the environment provided by the language learning programs not only offer language instruction, but also play the role of connecting community services, mentoring and counselling, job training, and citizenship education that functions as a stabilizer in the process of integration.

Magro and Ghorayshi (2010) further pointed out that the government and educational organizations in Canada do recognize the importance of language education for adult immigrants and refugees in policies. However, in the process of implementing these policies, the importance of language proficiency became a requirement with a standardized process that is well described on paper, thus stakeholders may understand or know about but they can hardly actualize it in practice. The researchers also noticed that educators and some of the program managers showed their concerns about there is no way or poor environment to implement the policies and make a good work for both learners and educators.

Adult Immigrant and Refugee Learners

Adult learners, as defined by adult learning theory and many scholars, are mature, confident, autonomy, determined, practical, multi-tasking, self-directed and experienced learners (Flynn et al., 2011; Merriam & Bieremma, 2014). These characteristics affect their motivation of learning in various ways. In addition, scholars believed that adult learners face multiple barriers in their learning because of the different roles in their lives (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). In this MAR, my study interest fell on adult immigrant and refugee learners'

unique identity in their learning. In addition to being adult learners, the identity of being immigrants and refugees entails other distinct characteristics compared to adult learners in general. Most of the scholars tended to portray adult immigrant and refugee learners by including pre-migration factors, such as immigration class, prior level of education, official language proficiency, cultural and linguistic differences, as well as the settlement experience itself, indicated that adult immigrant and refugee learners face unique challenges. For example, Shan (2015) emphasized the socio-cultural differences that adult immigrant and refugee learners brought into learning should be considered distinct from general adult learning. The author was critical of how the current language training and education system for the purpose of immigrant integration does not fully recognize the socio-cultural differences of their learners. Program operators may conveniently take a prescriptive approach from the instruction without pondering on how immigrants and refugees should be engaged in learning and training differently. The core objective was not only to promote effective learning for adult learners, but also to include the unique traits of adult immigrant and refugee learners in the entire process of training and education.

Also, one of the instructors as well as a researcher in the LINC program, Wilbur (2016) pointed out that being traumatized prior to immigration through war, persecution, violence, torture, or other horrendous experiences can be seen as one of the unique challenges that adult immigrant and particularly refugee learners faced in learning. The author argued that along with the changing of Canadian immigration patterns in recent years (CIC, 2017), instructors, organizations, and other stakeholders of the language learning programs have not yet been prepared to cope with emerging related issues. Through interviews with participant instructors, Wilbur (2016) presented several distinct behaviours of learners believed to have histories of trauma, such as absences from class frequently, withdrawal from participation, lack of focus and dramatic changes in progress, etc. The interviewed instructors expressed

their powerless when confronting problematic scenarios with learners who experienced trauma and confirmed the complexity of working with adult immigrant and refugee learners compared with working with general adult learners in a language learning program.

Similarly, Waterhouse's (2016) research showed that some educators of the LINC program already started attempting to bring some relevant approaches to their classes to cope with learners who experienced trauma, such as implementing violent life experiences telling activities in speaking skills practice, which aims to connect learners' prior life experiences into the language learning process to create an effective learning environment, furthermore, to strive for the possible transformation and build up a new life meaning. However, as the author admitted, such experimental approach still needs more investigation to prove its effectiveness and safety.

From a social cultural lens, Field (2012) considered immigrant learning process as the transitional period of life, in which learning connects with every aspect of the environment changing, which is different from learning in a regular case. This is similar to what Banerjee and Verma (2012) discussed in their article about post-migration educational investment to regular programs other than programs work for the purpose of integration, in which immigrant learners are considered more likely as regular adult learners, who are self-directed learners and motivated by their learning needs.

The Different Learning Characteristics

As discussed previously, adult immigrant and refugee learners are different from general adult learners in various aspects, but such different characteristics of the learners seem to be overlooked. Guo (2013) reviewed the major ESL programs in history that Canadian government sponsored for adult immigrant and refugee learners and confirmed cultural aspect as one of the key factors that contribute to the unique identity of adult immigrants learning has long been overlooked, which as the author criticized was rooted

from the immigration policies that devalue immigrants' native cultures for the purpose of assimilation instead of integration. Moreover, through the lens of critical multiculturalism, Guo elaborated on the relation between deficiency of the programs and the neglect of cultural aspects in the language learning programs. In this sense, Shan (2015) went even further to present pedagogy of difference in immigrant education, arguing that "Pedagogies of difference have historically emphasized the importance to recognize, respect, and integrate into curriculum different voices and cultures, equalize relationship between teachers and students" (p. 12). Such a statement reconfirms the theoretical foundation of considering socio-cultural differences within educational practice. Although Shan did not introduce more practical suggestions in approach, the perspective of pedagogies of difference and its extended terms such as border pedagogy and strength-based curriculum was inspiring for educators in immigrant education.

On the other hand, during my exploration of the literature, I was surprised to find that the Francization program was rarely examined by researchers as well as other related parties. Investigations either came from MIDI, the organization that provides and operates the Francization program, which tended to focus on the achievement rather than revealing the issues of the program. Other studies included the Francization program data as a part of other subjects. Furthermore, very little information relates to the learners' learning experiences in the Francization program. The data that had been collected mainly put the interests on the aspect of general management as well as the quantitative data about program enrollment.

Under such circumstances, the main information I utilized for the literature review and synthesis of this study was from Leclerc (2017), a report of the Auditor General of Quebec to the National Assembly for 2017 to 2018, which contained the data that rarely involved the perspectives of its learners and other stakeholders of the program. Regarding the learning outcomes of adult immigrant and refugee learners in the program, the report

indicated that fewer than 1 in 10 of the adult students who enrolled in the Francization program had become proficient enough to work or continue postsecondary studies in French. Furthermore, the report concluded that in 2015, only 9.1% immigrant learners enrolled in the program had reached the threshold for oral proficiency, 3.7% had reached it for written proficiency and 5.3% had reached it for written comprehension. The report also showed that the rate of enrollment has decreased with the increasing number of new immigrants and refugees and financial support in the past five years. These figures and rates illustrated the critical situation of the Francization program; however, the factors that led to such poor performance were not analyzed in the report.

Notably, Leclerc (2017) further pointed out that MIDI needs to improve its certain aspects of its control to the program, particularly with regard to educational support to students. For example, there was no review conducted in order to check the three hours per week that the teachers of the program must fulfill to help struggling students (p. 25). Nor was there a clear link between MIDI and the service provider (i.e., its public and private partner institutes) about which party should be responsible for the evaluation of students' eligibility that includes reviewing students' level of French (p. 26).

Discussion and Recommendations

I had two goals for this study: to identify the factors that affect adult immigrants and refugees' learning in the main language learning programs in Canada and to present recommendations that facilitate effective language learning based on the understanding of the impact of such factors while locating immigrant and refugee learning in the field of adult learning theory. To this end, my findings expand upon these two dimensions in order to further explore the MAR research questions.

Throughout the history of immigration in Canada, immigration policy evolved along with the changing of socio-economic needs. In the past few decades, immigration policy

focus shifted from employment to integration reflecting the orientation adjustment in the language learning programs (Guo, 2013). The challenges that adult immigrants and refugees confront in the process of learning in the host country are often discussed in various studies (Magro & Ghorayshi, 2010; Flynn et al., 2011; Kim, 2013). Compared to adult learners in general, adult immigrant and refugee learners not only have to deal with the common adult learning barriers such as the quality of instruction, financial support, learning motivation, as researchers often emphasized, they also need to cope with other factors that influence their learning that related to their identity the most. In this study, multi-identity, linguistic distance, pre-immigration educational level, and host community support were main contributory factors.

Multiple Identities

Adult immigrant and refugee learners carry multi-identities and face multi-layered barriers in learning compared to adult learners in general. From this point, the unique characteristics of adult immigrant and refugee learners can be illustrated through Flynn et al.'s (2011) discussion on four categories of barriers that marginalized adult learners have to confront in learning, in which the authors argued that adult immigrant and refugee learners form the representative group of the marginalized adult learners. The four dimensions the authors applied in the article were situational barriers, institutional barriers, motivational barriers and individual characteristics (p. 44).

For Flynn et al. (2011), situational barriers refer to learners' life environment included living situation, family support, financial situation, emotional situation, etc. Except financial and family support that adult learners often confront in learning in general, as an adult immigrant/refugee learner, there is no doubt that moving into a new country and trying to settle down causes many more difficulties. For instance, researchers have noticed the influence of emotional situation in immigrant and refugee learners' learning. Both Wilbur

(2016) and Magro and Ghorayshi (2010) investigated the impact of trauma experience in adult immigrants, particularly in refugees' learning. The authors claimed that some refugee learners were so traumatized because of past experience of war or violence, they cannot effectively partake in learning activities and easily withdraw from learning because of mental issues. In addition, adult female immigrant and refugee learners faced more challenges such as balancing family responsibilities and learning to adapt into the new society. Under such circumstance, however, there was no evidence showing that the language learning programs in Canada take various situations in consideration to develop or adjust the program management and delivery accordingly.

Linguistic Distance

In my experience of learning and working in the Francization program, linguistic distance to French language had a huge impact on the learning outcomes amongst adult immigrant and refugee learners. I still remember my first French class, when the Spanish speakers of the class interacted with our instructor actively, other Asian language speakers including me did not understand and barely spoke. The feeling of being left behind continued in the following classes until I left the program. Other researchers have also noticed the influence of linguistic distance as well as cultural difference in immigrant language learning.

Derwing and Waugh (2012) confirmed that the greater the linguistic distance between immigrants' native language and English or French, the harder to improve language efficiency. The investigation conducted by CIC (2017), which was based on the collected data from citizenship tests, clearly indicated the performance gap amongst 20 linguistic groups. Speakers of Romance languages such as Italian or Spanish obtained the highest score since they stayed closest with the target languages linguistically. In contrast, Asian speakers of languages such as Vietnamese and Mandarin had the lowest mean score particularly in

speaking and listening because of the sizable linguistic and cultural gap (Adamuti-Trache, 2013).

Pre-immigration Educational Level

According to Statistics Canada (2017), by 2011, approximately 82.3% of immigrants came from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, which has brought the language programs to dealing with the new challenges from adult language learners other than Europeans (CIC, 2017), particularly to manage learners not only from different cultural and language background, but also with various educational levels. Furthermore, since 2016, a massive number of refugees from the war zone landed in Canada, the Canadian immigration pattern was dramatically shifted, the language programs as well as instructors started facing many new issues such as how to manage the program and class with learners who have more complex identities and critical learning barriers.

One of the new issues was clearly presented by CBC (2018) who produced a series of reports focused on refugee settlement in Canada. One of the stories focused on newcomers who were illiterate in their native language struggling to learn English in Calgary. According to the interviews with the instructors, because many of their students had their education interrupted by conflicts such as war or violence, the institute faced the challenge of helping learners in English learning as well as providing literacy education. Sometimes the class needed to cover the knowledge of how to hold a pen correctly, how to use a table of contents of a book, how to turn on a computer, and how to write an email, etc. The instructors also confirmed that there was a sizable growth of beginners with literacy level needs.

In my practice in the Francization program in Quebec, I met a very similar situation in my class. Starting from the beginning of 2017, my colleagues and I had to add a special section into each of our classes to explain how to submit assignments and how to locate the learning materials in the student study portal, because a great number of students who were

refugees had never touched a computer before arriving in Canada. Even in the higher-level classes, I used to devote a lot of time and effort to explain what plagiarism is, why it is not acceptable, and even between family members, how copying each other's homework is not acceptable either.

With the increasing workload as well as illiteracy, instead of making the according and effective adjustment and support, the language programs such as LINC, ELT, and the Francization program left such critical situations to program managers and instructors who struggled to deal with the issues individually. The complaint reported by Magro and Ghorayshi (2010), who explored students with different educational levels assigned to the same language learning class that demotivated effective learning appeared in more recent studies by Wilbur (2016) and Ghadi et al. (2019). Therefore, such situations demand the stakeholders of the language learning programs to respond efficiently; program managers should produce corresponding guidance and support for effective learning.

Host Community Support

Based on the evaluation of the LINC program conducted by the CIC in 2010, listening and speaking, important components in language learning were not improved. Moreover, when referring to the learning outcomes of the language programs, other researchers agreed that listening and speaking were the most important but least improved parts in language learning programs. For instance, in the Francization program in Quebec, only 9.1% immigrant learners enrolled in the program had reached the threshold for oral proficiency (Leclerc, 2017). Ghadi et al. (2019) reported that their research participants complained that after 10 months language learning in the class, they still could speak not the language properly; they even commented "Formal English classes were a waste of time" (p. 82). After their investigation on the textbooks used in the LINC program, Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013) confirmed that extremely limited improvement in speaking and listening skills in

LINC might be caused by the neglect of including effective speaking and listening activities in the textbooks. Other researchers (Derwing & Munro, 2013; Derwing et al., 2008) also noted how the learners of LINC programs lacked the opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills.

Based on the understanding of such situations, many researchers shared the same opinion of recognizing the weight of local community support in adult immigrant and refugee learners' language learning process as well as in the journey of integration, and further suggested that language learning should not be considered in isolation, particularly for adult immigrant and refugee learners, who are not individual language producers (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). Most importantly, from a social-cultural perspective, Adamuti-Trache (2013) examined various strategies adopted by adult immigrants and refugees in language acquisition and pointed out that effective language capital acquisition requires active participation in the host society, and "the proficiency of the good language learners...were bound up not only in what they did individually but also in the possibilities their various communities offered them" (p. 123).

Adult immigrants and refugees' language learning should not be considered as an unilateral action. In other words, the responsibility of effective language learning of adult immigrants and refugees should be equally shared between learners and local communities. Guo (2013) also pointed out that immigrant integration is a two-way process; the local support from the host society is extremely important not only for language learning, but also for social integration. Specifically, Derwing and Waugh (2012), Shan (2015), and Zavialova (2017) all argued that the deficiency of speaking and listening of adult immigrant and refugee learners was partly caused by poor participation of local communities in language learning programs. Also, the majority of learning activities happened in the class, and some learners commented that what they learned in class was not helpful. What they needed was practical

language to help them survive; the words and sentences written in their notebooks did not help them speak better. Without interaction with real speakers, the language learning was just a waste of time (Ghadi et al., 2019).

Recommendations

As discussed, multiple identities, linguistic distance, pre-immigration educational level and local community support are the main factors that affect adult immigrant and refugee learners in their language learning process. Since I questioned the language learning programs for adult immigrants and refugees need to involve these factors so as to improve the quality of the programs, I offer the following recommendations.

An In-Depth Needs Assessment Procedure is Needed Before Enrollment

Based on the literature review and synthesis, it is evident that the main language learning programs in Canada do not meet their learners' needs in different aspects. Evidence showed that the language learning programs did provide support in various aspects caused by the standardized program of instruction and poor understanding of their learners. Therefore, I recommend a needs assessment procedure before registering learners into programs, one that requires program operators to not only collect the general information of the learners, but also expand upon the information to understand learners' real learning needs.

The findings of needs assessment would adjust to current language learning programs correspondingly which may lead to develop of new programs. In this case, I recommend diversifying the programs for different learners' learning needs. For example, based on learners' linguistic background information, the program managers may adjust the class arrangement including class assignment and instructors' assignment to meet learners' specific needs as in group work based on linguistic difference or cultural background. For learners who have employment-related needs, programs may guide them into other bridging programs for efficient job hunting. Overall, the management and program development should be

flexible to meet various needs instead of following a standardized program of instruction and educational policy.

Developing Bridging Programs for Immigrant Professionals

From the perspective of program development, Guo (2013) suggested to establish programs that are both in immigrant and refugees' native language and the target language to help especially the professionals understand the terminologies in English or French (p. 48). Furthermore, as other researchers suggested, instead of controlling language learning pace by setting the levels of workplace language proficiency, bridging programs should mainly focus on preparing learners for basic professional terms as well as workplace culture leaving further learning tasks for learners to study at the workplace with their colleagues. Students can learn from participating into the professional activities, which—from the perspective of language learning—is the most effective way for gaining language proficiency.

Developing Programs for Immigrant Parents

As most of the scholars suggested, learners' needs both inside and outside the classroom demand support. For learners who need to cope with their children's education, programs need to design relevant learning activities. For example, learners may indicate in the previous background checkup step that the motivation of learning is to support their children in education. In particular, they want to communicate with schools and teachers, and they need to understand the teaching content in order to get involved in their children's educative welfare. Learners who express such needs require different programs or at least a different focus.

Bringing Local Support in the Language Learning Programs

Local community plays a very important role in adult immigrant and refugee learners' language learning processes; it is necessary to include local perspectives both in program planning and program delivering. Newcomers' social integration demands effective

interaction with local society, which cannot occur from one side. The research stated that learners were looking for real conversation to practice language with native speakers, as well as learning from the local population on cultural and social terms. According to the research, there were a few projects that involved local participation in the language training programs.

For example, Ghadi et al. (2019) mentioned that the local community sent volunteers who played the role of guides to visit Syrian refugees' residences and help both in language practice and information sharing on a regular basis. In another research, Guo (2013) also discussed the importance of having the language learning assistant speaking both the learners' native language and the target language to help learners achieve a better outcome. However, these actions were not included in the main language learning programs as standard operation.

Conducting Program Evaluation

During my investigation in this study, the literature and documents were limited and mainly came from individual scholars or individual organizations, particularly when examining the Francization program in Quebec. I struggled to find any valid information about the program instruction, curricula, management, etc. through public data resources. The reports and statistics displayed on the official website of the Francization program was outdated and contained very little meaningful information. Thus, when Leclerc (2017) announced the result of its investigation on the Francization program even without detailed information, it still shocked the audience with details of poor learning outcomes and criticisms of the program.

I recommend that the funder(s) should meet with the program operators, instructors and learners, local communities as well as community stakeholders to conduct program assessments on a regular basis. It is important that these assessments be designed to provide

effective and practical information for either necessary adjustment on the current program settings or new program development.

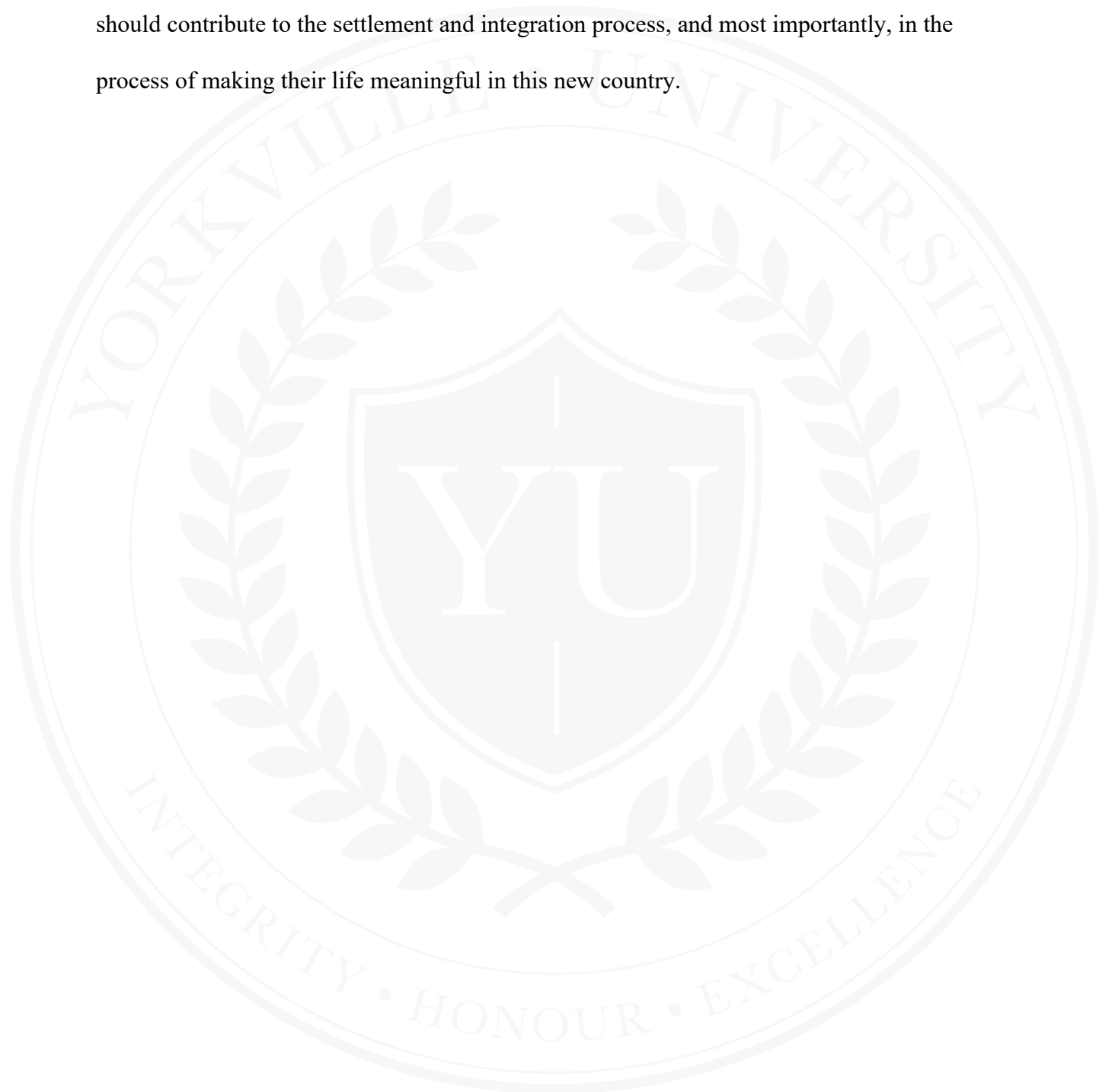
Conclusion

According to Canada's three-year immigration level plan, there will be 350,000 new immigrants and refugees who will call Canada a home by 2021. In Quebec, the proportion of immigrants and refugees in the total population has increased dramatically in the past 30 years (Canada Census, 2017). There is no doubt that the educational programs, particularly the language learning programs for immigrants and refugees, will continue to play a very important role in their settlement and integration process.

This study began with my exploration of adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning experience to identify the gap between their learning needs and the performance of the language learning programs. The recommendations that I presented were based on my reflection on my experience as well as the review and synthesis of the literature. During my investigation, it was not difficult to identify issues that existed in these programs. It was also not difficult to locate the factors that affect adult immigrant and refugee learners' learning outcomes, which in my understanding were pointed out by scholars repeatedly but have not attracted enough attention from policymakers and program sponsors for due change.

Now that I have completed this study, I have come to realize that I have gradually shaped my expectation on what kind of language learning programs that adult immigrant and refugee learners keenly look forward to. I expect that the unique characteristics of adult immigrant and refugee learners would be considered in the language programs operation. I expect that local society would show their support to newcomers. I expect that the government of Canada, the founder of the language programs, the operators, program managers, and instructors will be willing to take the responsibility of conducting a rigorous research on learners' authentic learning needs. From here, they should decide whether to use

programs as facilitation in learners' integrative process or just programs that serve standardized methods. All stakeholders including learners are liable for promoting the importance of the participation of local communities in the language learning process. All should contribute to the settlement and integration process, and most importantly, in the process of making their life meaningful in this new country.



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