IMMIGRANTS’ MASTERY IN THE HOST-COUNTRY LANGUAGE : CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES IN OECD COUNTRIES

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Quality in the linguistic integration of adult migrants: from values to policy and practice
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• **Measurement:**
  What do we mean by linguistic integration and what do we (want to) measure?

• **Links with labour market outcomes:**
  Does proficiency in the host-country language make a difference?

• **Policy responses:**
  what do we want to achieve and what works best?
1. Statistical tools on immigrants languages

1. Mother tongue and language spoken at home (PIAAC 2012)
   - **Native speakers**: have learned as a child the “official” language spoken in the host country and still understand that language
     - Monolingual
     - Multilingual
   - **Foreign speakers**: have learned another language as a child
     - Speak the host-country language at home
     - Speak another language at home

2. Proficiency in the host-country language
   - Self assessment from 2008 and 2014 LFS ad-hoc module
     “Need to improve host-country language skills to get an appropriate job”
   - Literacy score from PIAAC
     Mix of language and cognitive skills (level 1 to 5)
What do we measure with PIAAC?

Detailed labour market outcomes

- **Personal characteristics:** age, gender, highest qualification, years of schooling
- **Migrant characteristics:** country of birth, year of arrival, foreign qualification, languages learned and used
- **Training, skills used at work, etc.**
- **Literacy, numeracy proficiency / problem solving**
Two thirds of immigrants are foreign speakers in OECD countries.

Main language learned as a child and language spoken at home by immigrants, 16-64

On average, foreign speakers have lower literacy scores than the native-born.

Literacy scores by place of birth and mother tongue, 16-65, 2012, controlling for age, sex and level of education.


And in most countries, literacy scores of low-educated migrants are particularly low.
Host-country language proficiency is an important determinant of labour market outcomes

- The foreign-born who lack host-country language proficiency are a group with cumulative disadvantages (lower education levels, more likely to have foreign education and to be humanitarian migrants, etc.).

- But even after accounting for these, they face a 14%-point lower **employment rate** than other immigrants …

  …and an **over-qualification rate** that is on average 17 %-points higher.

- For labour migrants without language problems, one observes no longer a higher incidence of overqualification.
Foreign speakers who usually speak the host-country language at home are more likely to be employed than other foreign speakers.

Immigrants employment rates by mother tongue and language used at home, 16-65, 2012, Difference with the native-born, in % points

What do we want to achieve and what works best?

• Assist learners to determine the types and levels of proficiency that they need for their work and daily life and adapt the learning trajectory accordingly

• Organise different tracks by individuals educational background and language families

• Implement flexible programmes compatible with daily life (with work, caring children, …)

• Extend on-the-job language training (co-financed by employers)
Thank you for your attention

Further reading:

http://www.oecd.org/migration/

http://www.oecd.org/els/jobsforimmigrantssseries.htm