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by René Houle

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Introduction

Immigrant-language transmission is one element of the settlement process for immigrant communities in Canada. Like religion, language of origin can be a marker of ethnicity, and can provide socioeconomic advantages like access to certain goods and services offered by or for the immigrant community. Immigrant children's academic success is associated with maintaining one's language of origin and ethnic loyalties. The survival of immigrant languages and their intergenerational transmission in this country are also issues related to Canadian multiculturalism. Both the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and the preamble to the *Official Languages Act* state that Canada should encourage the preservation of foreign languages and enhance their status and use. Immigrant-language transmission in Canada is not greatly different from the situation in the United States. In that country, studies show that the knowledge and use of immigrant languages have nearly disappeared in favour of English among third-generation adults,¹ if not the second.² In Canada, studies show slightly more balanced outcomes. While immigrant groups of European origin have had more difficulty preserving

their language over time, more recent immigrant groups, such as those who speak Spanish, Chinese or Punjabi, are generally more likely to maintain theirs.³

Several factors influence whether immigrant languages are passed on from one generation to another. The most important factor is the extent to which children are exposed to those languages within the family.⁴ Exposure to one's immigrant language can also occur outside the home, and through contact with other children who are also exposed to those languages and various learning activities organized by language communities,⁵ as well as through greater contact with other people with the same mother tongue. From this perspective, the fact that most immigrants who settled in Canada since the end of the Second World War were family immigrants has definitely had a positive effect on the vitality of immigrant languages. In all cases, it is primarily through adults, especially mothers, that language is passed on to children.

In this article, we look at how immigrant-language transmission evolved between 1981 and 2006. First, a comparison of the situation between two censuses spaced 25 years apart. This is a historical comparison of two populations

defined identically as immigrant mothers with Canadian-born children under 18 years of age. Did language transmission increase or decrease during this period? To what extent did the various factors involving exposure to the languages influence this change?

Second, we examine the intergenerational dimension of the transmission of immigrant languages between immigrant mothers who, in the 1981 Census, had Canadian-born children under 18 years of age compared to their daughters 25 years later (2006) who were between 25 and 42 years of age and were mothers themselves (see "What you should know about this study" for more information on the methods, concepts and definitions).

In 2006, the four immigrant languages transmitted most often were Armenian, Punjabi, Bengali and Urdu

Language transmission differs greatly from one language group to another (Table 1). For some language groups (Dutch, Italian, Creole and Tagalog), transmission of the mother's mother tongue to children under 18 years of age, either as a mother tongue or as a language spoken most often or on a regular basis at home, does not

What you should know about this study

This article examines parent–child language transmission among immigrants whose mother tongue is a language other than English, French, an Aboriginal language or a sign language. For the purposes of this study, these other languages are designated ‘immigrant languages.’ Immigrant languages not specified are also excluded from the analyses.

The data are drawn from the long forms of the 1981 and 2006 censuses, which were completed by 20% of Canadian households. Persons living in collective dwellings are excluded. All estimates were weighted to represent the overall population of the language groups studied.

To examine how language transmission evolved, immigrant women from 1981 are compared to those from 2006 by measuring the proportion of their Canadian-born children under 18 years of age with the same mother tongue. The population of children is limited to those born in Canada since the circumstances of transmission for children who came to Canada with their mothers are quite different.

The intergenerational approach compares mothers in 1981 to their adult Canadian-born daughters 25 years later, in 2006. To make the comparison as accurate as possible, only mothers aged 25 to 42 at the time of the 2006 Census, who were daughters under 18 years of age in 1981, are included. Women aged 25 to 42 who were born in Canada to immigrant mothers and who did not have an immigrant language as their mother tongue are excluded.

Only single responses to the mother tongue question were retained, since multiple responses given in 1981 could not be used because they were incomplete. This limits the study, since a portion of the women who have both an immigrant language and one of Canada’s two official languages as their mother tongue (8% of immigrant women in the 2006 Census) are excluded from the analyses. The implications of this exclusion were small in 2006, as the intensity of immigrant-language transmission from immigrant mothers with Canadian-born children under 18 was 56% when multiple-responses were included and 55% when they were excluded.

The language groups used in this analysis were created using the mother-tongue categories specified in the census. Categories like Slavic languages not included in the specified languages (Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, etc.) are therefore

excluded. For the historical comparison, the analysis is limited to groups with at least 200 women, before weighting, from the specified language group in 1981 and 2006. However, a residual category including all other specified languages was created. For the intergenerational comparison, the number-of-women criterion was lowered to 150 to obtain a slightly larger range of language groups, since fewer daughters than mothers have an immigrant mother tongue.

Multivariate analysis

The intensity of language transmission is calculated as the proportion of children whose mother tongue is the same as that of their mothers. Since this is a proportion, logistic regression analysis was chosen for modelling.

Four types of models were developed. Model 1 isolates the census year’s effect in relation to the linguistic group’s effect on the probability of language transmission. This model compares the evolution of each linguistic group between 1981 and 2006 by holding the other variables constant. Model 2 isolates the census year’s effect on language transmission by taking the other variables into account, including the linguistic group. Model 3 isolates the census year’s effect on language transmission without taking other variables into account (non-controlled). Finally, model 4 is specific to each census year. It determines each variable’s effect on language transmission by holding the other variables in the model constant. The factors used in the regressions are grouped as follows: sociodemographic characteristics, namely the children’s sex and age, as well as the mother’s age and level of education; characteristics of the union, family or household, including the mixed nature of the union (according to the mother-tongue of each partner); the mother’s migratory characteristics like period of immigration and age on arrival in Canada; and the context variables that serve to describe the geographic area. The context variables refer to three census division characteristics: namely adult population for each mother tongue, recent-immigrant population (10 years or less of residence in Canada), and bilingual population. In all three cases, the percentage for each population within the total adult population was calculated. These variables are substituted for those for the province or census metropolitan area.

exceed 20%. Conversely, the intensity of language transmission is very high for the Armenian, Punjabi, Chinese, Persian, Turkish, Bengali and Urdu groups, among which it exceeds 70%. However, for some languages, such as Portuguese, Greek, Creole and Hindi, the percentages of those who report that they can speak the language are much higher than the percentages who report the language as a mother tongue or a language spoken at home.

The intensity of immigrant-language transmission is generally on the rise

For all language groups, in the 1981 Census, immigrant languages were

passed on to 41% of Canadian-born children under 18 years of age. In the 2006 Census immigrant languages were passed on to 55% of Canadian-born children in this age group—an increase of 14 percentage points from 1981 (Table 2). The intensity of immigrant-language transmission increased in the majority of the 20 language groups. The exceptions were primarily European languages (Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Czech), for which there was a decrease, as well as Tagalog and Armenian, which were passed on as often in 1981 as 2006.

Between 1981 and 2006, the composition of immigration changed

considerably, and the changes may have had a major impact on the intensity of immigrant-language transmission. The same changes were evident for women’s socioeconomic profile in relation to their education level, the linguistic tradition of the country where they were born (according to the status of English and French in that country), and the mother-tongue groups to which they belonged. For example, in 1981, 7% of mothers had a university degree, compared to 28% in 2006. In 1981, 13% of mothers came from a country where French or English had special status, compared to 53% in 2006, with 40% for English and 13% for French.⁶

Table 1 Proportion of children aged less than 18, born in Canada, with the same mother tongue, same language spoken at home or some knowledge of their mother’s mother tongue, 2006

Mother’s mother tongue	Child’s language			Mother’s mother tongue	Child’s language		
	Same mother tongue	Mother’s mother tongue spoken at home ¹	Some knowledge of the mother’s mother tongue		Same mother tongue	Mother’s mother tongue spoken at home ¹	Some knowledge of the mother’s mother tongue
Dutch	15	13	20	Somali	48	54	62
German	43	41	48	Akan (Twi)	21	27	37
Portuguese	35	38	48	Persian (Farsi)	71	70	79
Spanish	53	62	70	Punjabi (Pandjabi)	81	80	89
Romanian	64	65	71	Gujarati	64	59	69
Italian	20	16	30	Sinhala (Sinhalese)	24	29	31
Greek	42	45	59	Hindi	50	51	65
Armenian	75	72	77	Urdu	76	76	84
Russian	64	62	68	Bengali	73	76	82
Serbo-Croatian ²	62	65	72	Malayalam	32	37	44
Czech	21	25	29	Tamil	65	72	81
Polish	64	64	72	Japanese	52	64	67
Ukrainian	66	63	72	Korean	54	55	60
Slovak	38	38	47	Chinese ³	70	71	78
Hungarian	43	40	48	Lao	37	37	48
Creoles	12	21	39	Vietnamese	61	63	70
Turkish	69	70	76	Khmer (Cambodian)	40	40	49
Arabic	55	62	71	Tagalog (Pilipino)	15	16	22
Hebrew	33	33	48	Ilocano	9	8	10
Amharic	27	30	36	Other languages	31	33	37

1. Language most often or regularly spoken at home.
 2. Includes Croatian, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian and Bosniac.
 3. Chinese languages: Chinese (not otherwise specified), Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Chaochow (Teochow), Fukien, Shanghainese and Taiwanese.
 Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Table 2 Immigrant-language transmission, children aged less than 18, born in Canada, 1981 and 2006

Mother's mother tongue	Children with same mother tongue as their mothers		Odds of having same mother tongue as mother	
	1981†	2006	1981†	2006
	percentage		odds ratio ³	
Dutch	3	15*	0.022	0.249*
German	24	43*	0.230	0.632*
Portuguese	56	35*	0.295	0.362
Spanish	41	53*	0.296	0.778*
Italian	52	20*	0.292	0.229*
Greek	62	42*	0.372	0.674*
Armenian	78	75	1.346	2.425*
Serbo-Croatian ¹	51	62*	0.345	1.013*
Czech	37	21*	0.306	0.445
Polish	34	64*	0.350	1.196*
Ukrainian	44	66*	1.033	1.929*
Hungarian	27	43*	0.224	0.817*
Arabic	30	55*	0.131	0.349*
Punjabi (Punjabi)	64	81*	0.602	1.950*
Hindi	29	50*	0.150	0.696*
Urdu	44	76*	0.248	1.362*
Japanese	34	52*	0.220	2.390*
Korean	32	54*	0.109	0.645*
Chinese ²	61	70*	0.462	1.000*
Tagalog (Pilipino)	12	15	0.066	0.112*
Other languages	26	52*	0.247	0.498*
Year's effect	...	...	1.000	2.312*
Year's effect (non-controlled)	41	55*	1.000	1.777*

† reference year

* statistically significant difference from the reference year at $p < 0.01$

1. Includes Croatian, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian and Bosniac.

2. Chinese languages: Chinese (not otherwise specified), Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Chaochow (Teochow), Fukien, Shanghainese and Taiwanese.

3. The odds ratios related to the language groups are from model 1. The odds ratios related to the year's effect stem from models 2 and 3. See "What you should know about this study."

Source: Statistics Canada, 1981 and 2006 Censuses of Population.

In terms of mother tongue, in 1981, the distribution was dominated by European languages, whereas the situation was completely different 25 years later, when people with Asian (Chinese, Tagalog, Punjabi, Arabic) and Latin American (Spanish) mother tongues accounted for the majority of immigrants.

Using logistic regression models, it is possible to examine how language transmission evolved between 1981 and 2006 for the different language groups, taking several factors that

influence the chances of transmission into account. The results of the regressions confirm that immigrant-language transmission increased between 1981 and 2006 for most groups (Table 2). Just one group (Italian) saw its language transmission decline between the two censuses and for two groups (Portuguese and Czech) the intensity of the phenomenon remained stable over the period. In all three cases, the immigrant groups had been long-settled in Canada.

Controlling for other variables increases the intensity of language transmission. That is, when other characteristics were held constant, the difference between the intensity of language transmission between the two censuses was larger than the raw percentages would indicate. This is largely the result of the increase in the mothers' education level, which had the effect of reducing language transmission, since more-educated women are less likely to pass on their mother tongue to their children. In

other words, the immigrant-language transmission, already stronger in 2006 than in 1981, would have been even more so if mothers' education profile had remained unchanged (Table 2).

From one generation to another living in Canada, immigrant-language transmission declines

To study how intergenerational language transmission has changed over time, mothers in 1981 were compared with their daughters who had become mothers 25 years later, in 2006 (see "What you should know about this study"). The intensity of intergenerational language transmission moved in the opposite direction from historic transmission. Whereas 41% of mothers passed on their language in 1981, the corresponding proportion for their daughters 25 years later was only 23%, a decrease of 18 percentage points⁷ (Table 3). It is the 'marriage

market,' more than any other factor, that determines how intergenerational language transmission changes over time. As many studies have documented, forming an exogamous union⁸ considerably reduces immigrant-language transmission. Canadian-born daughters of immigrant mothers are exposed to a marriage market dominated by a large demographic pool of potential partners with English or French as their mother tongue who do not know the immigrant language.

This downward trend was observed for nine language groups, including the Italian, Greek and Chinese groups. The pattern was stable for the Punjabi group. Furthermore, the language transmission of second-generation women to their children is the strongest for those whose mother tongue was Punjabi (53%), followed by those whose mother tongue was Greek (41%) and Spanish (30%).

Daughters have a different life than their mothers

Many characteristics of mothers in 2006 were different from those of their own mothers 25 years earlier. Apart from the fact that mothers with children in 2006 were on average younger than their own mothers in 1981, it was mainly the education level and the endogamous or exogamous nature of unions that changed. In 1981, nearly 60% of mothers had no diploma, whereas in 2006, only 4% of their adult daughters were in this situation. Conversely, 7% of mothers had a university degree in 1981, compared to 35% of their adult daughters in 2006. Also in 2006, 55% of their daughters, all second-generation and therefore born in Canada, were living in an exogamous union, in most cases with a spouse with English or French as his mother tongue, whereas in 1981 the majority of mothers (79%)

Table 3 Language transmission from immigrant mothers in 1981 to their daughters aged 25 to 42 in 2006 and their children aged less than 18, born in Canada, 1981 and 2006

Mother's mother tongue	Children with same mother tongue as their mothers		Odds of having same mother tongue as mother	
	1981†	2006	1981†	2006
	percentage		odds ratio ³	
German	24	19*	1.236	1.454
Portuguese	56	14*	1.976	0.693*
Spanish	41	30*	2.000	3.600
Italian	52	21*	1.487	0.489*
Greek	62	41*	2.119	1.884
Serbo-Croatian ¹	51	24*	2.497	3.097
Polish	34	17*	2.017	2.654
Hungarian	27	10*	1.357	2.750
Punjabi (Punjabi)	64	53	3.259	3.044
Chinese ²	61	22*	2.751	1.000*
Others	19	23*	0.636	2.140*
Year's effect	...	...	1.000	0.644*
Year's effect (non-controlled)	41	23*	1.000	0.444*

† reference year

* statistically significant difference from the reference year at $p < 0.01$

1. Includes Croatian, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian and Bosniac.

2. Chinese languages: Chinese (not otherwise specified), Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Chaochow (Teochow), Fukien, Shanghainese and Taiwanese.

3. The odds ratios related to the language groups are from model 1. The odds ratios related to the year's effect stem from models 2 and 3. See "What you should know about this study."

Source: Statistics Canada, 1981 and 2006 Censuses of Population.

had a spouse whose mother tongue was the same as theirs. Another key difference is that unlike their immigrant mothers, the daughters who had become mothers in 2006 had spent their entire childhood and adolescence in Canada. The social and cultural context of childhood can have a lasting influence on values and behaviours, including the desire to pass on one's mother tongue. The other characteristics of the two groups of women were fairly similar. When these characteristics were taken into account, the picture of how intergenerational transmission has evolved changes substantially. While a decrease is still observed between 1981 and 2006 for all language groups, it is more accurate to speak of stability for most language groups (Table 3).⁹

Just as for historical change, holding the influence of other factors constant results in an increase in the intensity of language transmission. However, the explanation is different: it is no longer only the education level that reduces intergenerational transmission, but also the endogamous or exogamous nature of the couple. The latter factor alone explains almost all the difference in the intensity of intergenerational transmission between mothers in 1981 and their daughters in 2006 (Table 3).

Very few grandchildren of 1981 immigrant mothers had the same mother tongue as their grandmothers

To determine the transfer of language over three generations, the change in the rate of language transmission between generations must be examined. In 1981, 41% of women had passed on their mother tongue to their children. A quarter century later, in 2006, 23% of first-generation immigrant women who had been transmitted their own mother's mother tongue would in turn have passed it on to their own children. In all, 10% (or 41% multiplied by 23%) of the grandchildren of the 1981 first-

generation immigrant mothers would have the same mother tongue as their mother and grandmother.

Two language groups stand out from the others from the standpoint of intergenerational transmission. In the Punjabi group, one-third of the grandchildren of 1981 women would have their grandmother's mother tongue, whereas in the Greek group, the proportion would be one-quarter (Table 4). The latter result is noteworthy in that Greek-speaking people comprise a population that has been settled in Canada for a relatively long time. In contrast, the intensity of transmission to the third generation would be below the 10% level for the German, Portuguese, Polish and Hungarian language groups, which are also long-settled groups. One factor explaining the difference between the language groups is the level of endogamy (with respect to mother tongue) in the second generation. Thus the proportion of endogamous couples for Canadian-born women with Punjabi or Greek as their

mother tongue would be 83% and 56%, respectively. However, the endogamy level would also be fairly high for women in the Italian (55%), Portuguese and Chinese (46%) groups, for whom intergenerational language transmission to the third generation is considerably lower than for women in the first two groups (data not shown).

Many factors influence immigrant-language transmission

Besides language, there are many supplementary variables associated with the probability of transmitting a language (Table 5). First, being a male child reduces the probability of the mother's mother tongue being passed on, both in 1981 and 2006. The effect of the children's sex is nearly the same in 1981 as in 2006, although the reason for this difference between girls and boys is uncertain. Children's age is also related to language transmission, especially in 2006: the older the child, the lower the intensity of language transmission tends to be.

Table 4 Extinction table of immigrant languages as mother tongues from first to third generation in Canada, 1981 and 2006

Mother's mother tongue	Generation		
	First	Second	Third
	percentage		
German	100	24	5
Portuguese	100	56	8
Spanish	100	41	12
Italian	100	52	11
Greek	100	62	26
Serbo-Croatian ¹	100	51	12
Polish	100	34	6
Hungarian	100	27	3
Pundjabi (Pandjabi)	100	64	33
Chinese ²	100	61	14
Total	100	41	10

1. Includes Croatian, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian and Bosniac.
 2. Chinese languages: Chinese (not otherwise specified), Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Chaochow (Teochow), Fukien, Shanghainese and Taiwanese.
 Source: Statistics Canada, 1981 and 2006 Censuses of Population.

Table 5 Odds of mother transmitting her mother tongue to her Canadian-born children less than 18 years of age, 1981 and 2006

	1981			2006		
	Odds ratio	Confidence interval at 99%		Odds ratio	Confidence interval at 99%	
		Lower limit	Upper limit		Lower limit	Upper limit
odds ratio						
Child's sex						
Female†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
Male	0.95*	0.92	0.99	0.93*	0.90	0.97
Child's age						
5 years or less†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
6 to 12 years	0.93*	0.88	0.98	0.84*	0.80	0.89
13 to 17 years	1.04	0.97	1.12	0.93	0.86	1.00
Age of mother at census						
15 to 24 years	1.28*	1.10	1.48	1.41*	1.15	1.73
25 to 34 years†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
35 to 44 years	1.00	0.92	1.09	0.83*	0.76	0.89
45 years or more	1.10	0.97	1.24	0.76*	0.68	0.85
Highest diploma of mother						
No diploma	1.52*	1.33	1.73	1.45*	1.32	1.59
High school diploma or apprenticeship	1.16*	1.01	1.32	1.07	0.99	1.15
College, CEGEP	1.03	0.88	1.21	0.95	0.88	1.03
University†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
Mother in a common-law union						
No†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
Yes	0.85	0.57	1.26	0.86*	0.75	0.99
Preschool children (aged 5 or less) in the family						
Each additional preschool child in the family	1.24*	1.18	1.31	1.09*	1.03	1.14
Presence of persons who know neither English nor French in the household						
No†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
Yes	1.25*	1.11	1.40	1.29*	1.14	1.46
Mixed union on the mother tongue criteria						
Both partners have the same mother tongue†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
Each partner has a different mother tongue (immigrant language)	0.10*	0.08	0.12	0.13*	0.12	0.15
Each partner has a different mother tongue (English or French)	0.05*	0.05	0.06	0.05*	0.05	0.06
Mother's arrival period in Canada						
26 years or more before the census†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
Between 16 and 25 years before the census	1.45*	1.30	1.61	1.40*	1.23	1.58
Between 11 and 15 years before the census	1.74*	1.52	1.99	1.68*	1.46	1.94
Between 6 and 10 years before the census	2.10*	1.78	2.48	1.83*	1.56	2.15
5 years or less before the census	2.75*	2.26	3.34	2.38*	1.99	2.83
Age of mother at arrival in Canada						
Less than 6 years old	0.92	0.77	1.10	0.67*	0.56	0.81
Between 6 and 12 years old	0.88*	0.77	1.00	0.69*	0.60	0.79
Between 13 and 18 years old	0.95	0.87	1.03	0.95	0.86	1.05
19 years or older†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...

Table 5 Odds of mother transmitting her mother tongue to her Canadian-born children less than 18 years of age, 1981 and 2006 (continued)

	1981			2006		
	Odds ratio	Confidence interval at 99%		Odds ratio	Confidence interval at 99%	
		lower limit	upper limit		lower limit	upper limit
odds ratio						
Linguistic tradition in mother's country of birth						
Neither English nor French†	1.00	...	...	1.00	...	...
English (or English and French)	0.78*	0.67	0.91	0.62*	0.57	0.68
French	1.13	0.92	1.38	0.70*	0.63	0.77
Percentage of the population by mother tongue in census division where mother lives						
Increase of 1% of population with same mother tongue as mother	1.06*	1.05	1.07	1.01	1.00	1.02
Percentage of recent immigrants (in Canada 10 years or less) in the census division where mother lives						
Increase of 1% of recent immigrants in the census division	1.02*	1.01	1.03	1.02*	1.01	1.02
Percentage of officially bilingual people in census division where mother lives						
Increase of 1% of bilingual persons in the census division	1.03*	1.02	1.03	1.01*	1.01	1.01

† reference group

* statistically significant difference from the reference group at $p < 0.01$

Source: Statistics Canada, 1981 and 2006 Censuses of Population.

Also, the youngest mothers have the greatest propensity to pass on their mother tongue. The reason for this is unclear, but it is possible that women who bear children at a younger age are more likely to exhibit 'traditional' values and practices typical of their country of origin and are therefore more likely to pass on their mother tongue.

Education level has a notable influence on language transmission: the latter tends to decline as the former rises. Such a result is possibly related to the concerns and abilities of the most educated parents to optimize their children's chances for success in Canada by adopting and transmitting English or French as the home language.¹⁰ However, the effect of education in 2006 needs to be qualified; in that year, the effect of a diploma was seen only for mothers with no diploma, who comprised only 15% of all mothers included in the analysis.

Mothers in common-law unions were less likely to pass on the immigrant language than married mothers in 2006, but not in 1981, a year when such unions were still relatively uncommon in Canada. Common-law unions are a less traditional family framework than marriage, and immigrant-language use might therefore be less widespread in them. Some have hypothesized that marriage is a form of pairing that is more conducive than common-law union to the involvement of the spouses' extended families, since common-law unions might be frowned upon in some groups from societies where traditional family values are very strong and where intergenerational ties are codified.¹¹

The composition of families or households is closely linked to language transmission. The presence of preschool-aged children (first- or second-generation children) in the family and the presence of adults who know neither English nor French

within the household are two factors positively associated with language transmission. The presence of persons within the household who know neither English nor French increases the use of the immigrant language.¹² It seems likely that this effect is also felt within a language community when many members are not proficient in the language of the majority.¹³ Also, parents are more likely to use their mother tongue when there are preschool-aged children in the home.¹⁴

Marrying a person who does not speak the same language is the main factor reducing the intensity of immigrant-language transmission

Whether a union is endogamous or exogamous is of paramount importance for language transmission. Both parents having the same mother tongue increases transmission markedly.¹⁵

Mothers' migration characteristics form a group of characteristics that are also strongly associated with language transmission. The immigration period is particularly crucial: the propensity to transmit one's mother tongue weakens as the length of residence in Canada increases.

Also, women who arrived before or during adolescence integrate into the host society economically and linguistically more easily than their parents. Their knowledge of the official languages is better than that of their parents, and it seems likely that some of them will choose not to transmit their mother tongue to their children. The results validate this explanation only for 2006, where the intensity of transmission was lower for women who came to Canada before age 13, that is, before having begun high school.

Coming from a country where one of the official languages is French or English leads to the gradual adoption of one of Canada's official languages

A number of countries, because of their history, have English or French as an official, national or historical language. Women from these countries are more likely than others to have adopted English or French at home or to have a very good knowledge of these languages. As a result, they are also more likely to have passed on one of Canada's official languages to their children. According to our findings, the fact that a mother is born in a country with an anglophone tradition reduces the propensity to transmit her immigrant mother tongue, in both 1981 and 2006. The corresponding effect in the case of a mother born in a country with a francophone tradition is seen only in 2006, where the effect is the same as for English.¹⁶

The factors relating to exposure to languages spoken outside the family also had a significant effect on language transmission, especially in 1981. The size and concentration

of language groups were directly correlated with language transmission in 1981, while the effect was much less evident in 2006. The effect of this 'communal' or 'ecological' factor on language retention has been observed for different immigrant language groups in the United States¹⁷ and for official-language minority groups in Canada.¹⁸ Such concentrations offer opportunities to practise these languages, whether through informal contact among families, in more formal learning activities designed for school-aged children, or in connection with cultural or religious community institutions, media and activities.

The arrival of new speakers of an immigrant language helps to keep it alive

In addition, the steady influx of new immigrants had a positive influence on the transmission of immigrant mother tongues, both in 1981 and 2006. These new immigrants generally do not have as good knowledge of the official languages and tend to concentrate in cities and form 'ethnic' neighbourhoods where the use of English and French is less widespread and may be seen as less essential in everyday life.

In Canada, there have also been specific regional effects that do not appear to be related to the geographic concentration of language groups. Thus, the greatest transmission of immigrant-languages is in Quebec,¹⁹ whereas the largest concentrations of immigrants in Canada are in Ontario and British Columbia, especially in Toronto and Vancouver. The reasons cited to explain this situation in Quebec are generally related to Quebec's unique linguistic complexity (English dominant in North America, French the official language of Quebec, extensive multilingualism among immigrants' children²⁰). This suggests that decisions concerning language transmission to children may be influenced by the coexistence of French and English in public in

Montréal. Our models include a contextual measure of French-English bilingualism, whose effect on immigrant-language transmission was positive and significant both in 1981 and 2006. The psychosocial mechanism underlying these linguistic behaviours has yet to be documented. However, results not shown indicate that the effect of bilingualism disappears when a variable representing the metropolitan area of residence is added.

Summary

The evolution of intergenerational language transmission between 1981 and 2006 shows a certain persistence of immigrant languages in Canada in a strong migratory-flow context. In general, recently arrived female immigrants from South America, Asia and the Arab world tend, with a few notable exceptions like the Tagalog group from the Philippines, to pass on their language of origin to a sizeable proportion of their Canadian-born children. But these new immigrants are not necessarily different from the immigrant women of European origin who preceded them. They differ from them in that their arrival in Canada is recent. But they resemble them in that their endogamy level is similar: the proportions of women paired with a man of the same mother tongue in the Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian and Armenian groups in 1981 are comparable to those in the Arabic, Punjabi, Urdu and Chinese groups in 2006, at more than 80% (data not shown).

The strong migratory flows into Canada from abroad are a more important factor than the concentration of language groups themselves. The intensity of intergenerational immigrant-language transmission increased between 1981 and 2006, and this increase would have been even greater had it not been for the changes in the characteristics of these immigrants. From this standpoint, the selection of immigrants on the basis of

their education and knowledge of Canada's official languages appears to have contributed to slowing language transmission. Other factors have stimulated immigrant-language transmission in Canada, for example, globalization, which has made communications with foreign countries more accessible, less costly and faster (resulting from new information and communications technologies like the Internet and satellite television), and increased international air travel.

The intensity and regularity of international migratory flows to Canada mean that immigrant populations are constantly exposed to their language of origin, especially since migration often involves entire families.

Finally, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* supports and promotes different practices and activities (with regard to religion, children) that are based on groups' specificity or that foster religious, national or linguistic diversity in Canada. This article's long-term outlook should put these findings in perspective. As first-generation immigrants age, their descendants are experiencing rapidly decreasing immigrant-language transmission, which is at risk in certain groups with a pool of aging speakers and no longer able to renew itself (the German, Portuguese, Hungarian and Polish groups), notably through new migratory flows.



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7. Restricting the population of daughters to those aged 25 to 42, rather than including all ages, slightly affects the percentage value of the intensity of intergenerational language transmission. For all languages, including all women aged 15 and over slightly decreases the intensity of transmission to 20.2%.
8. An exogamous union refers to a couple in which each spouse has a different mother tongue.
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