



***LINGUISTIC INTEGRATION OF ADULT
MIGRANTS:
TOWARDS THE EVALUATION OF POLICY
AND PRACTICE***

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Outline

- Language proficiency – the elephant in the room.
- Why language proficiency is important.
- The association between parental proficiency and children's assessment outcomes.
- Assessed performance by adult immigrants.
- Is full second-language proficiency possible for all?
- Results and policy implications.
- PIAAC.

We all know language proficiency is important, yet often we seem to pretend that it is not.

- The Blue Card: Is inter-European mobility a realistic possibility without polyglot fluency by skilled immigrants?
- Skilled labour migration: Can employers recruit directly into jobs from abroad when a national language is not (or scarcely) spoken outside the country?
- Overqualification: Is the issue with the proverbial taxi-driver with a PhD a problem of non-recognised qualifications or one of language proficiency?
- Why did so many young highly educated EU enlargement migrants take on lesser skilled jobs?

Why language proficiency is important.

- It is needed in order to make the full use of one's other skills and competencies.
- It may be less necessary for lesser skilled jobs, but safety and security issues in the workplace still require a minimum level of proficiency.
- It is needed to « function » adequately in society.
- Most of all, it is needed to assist one's children in « navigating » through the educational system and society.

PISA (2006) science scores of 15 year old children of immigrants who do not speak the national language at home (very much) compared to those who do (8 EU countries).

Mother's education	Children born in country	Children born abroad
At best primary	-18	-39
Lower secondary	-27	-38
Upper secondary	-32	-40
Tertiary	-27	-46

Note: But even children of immigrants who largely speak the host-country language at home have lower scores than children of the native-born.

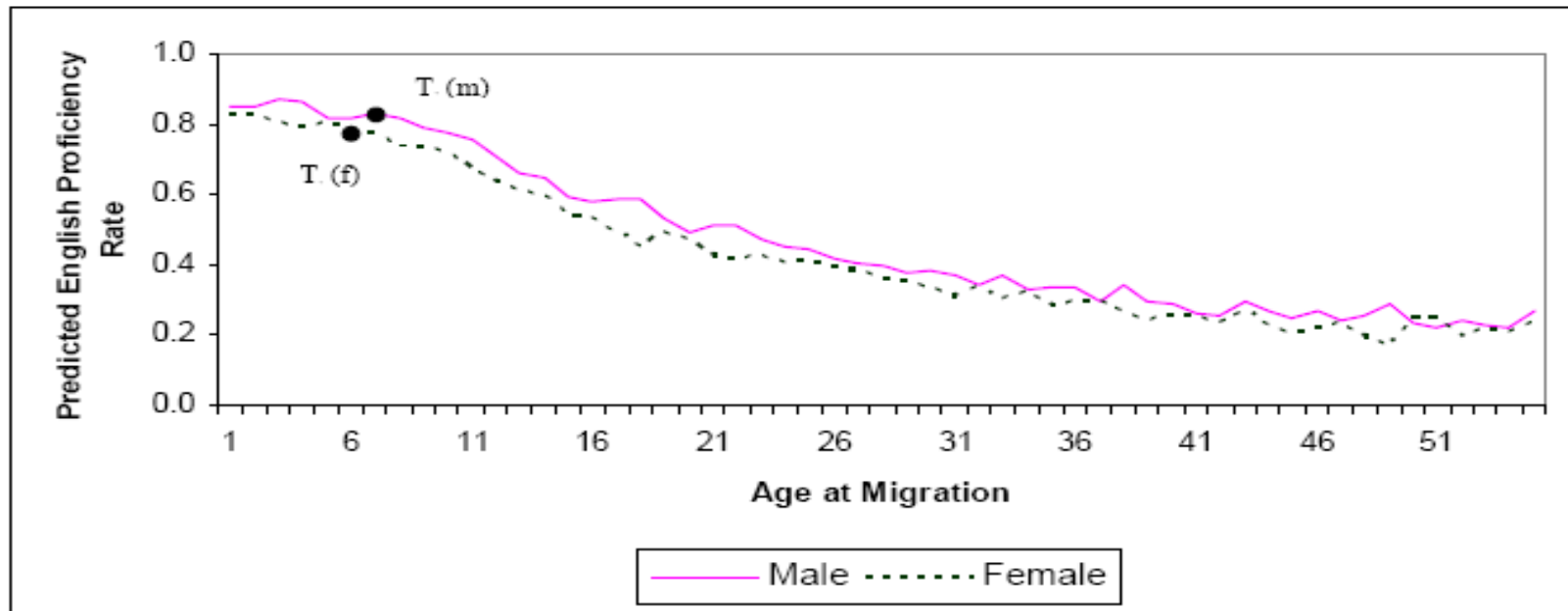
Adult assessment scores on prose scale, IALS by educational attainment, 1995-1998.

	Immigrants		Non-immigrants (in participating OECD countries)
	From less developed countries	From participating OECD countries	
At best primary	133	175	203
Lower secondary	193	238	247
Upper secondary +	248	269	284
Tertiary	273	301	322

IALS: International adult literacy survey

Is it possible for an immigrant to attain full proficiency?

Figure 4
Effects of Age at Migration on English Proficiency,
Immigrants from Countries Other than Mexico, by Gender



Source: Authors' calculations from 2000 US Census, 1% Public Use Microdata Sample.

From Chiswick and Miller (2007) => IZA 2575.

Results and policy implications

- Easy to get to a minimum level, good proficiency takes much longer, depends on « language distance » and varies from person to person.
- Good language proficiency among immigrants is clearly a public good and should be publicly funded for all immigrants.
- Good language proficiency among immigrant parents is needed to facilitate the integration of the children
 - Early family reunification
 - Early exposure to the host-country language
 - Enhanced language instruction

OECD reviews of the education of children of immigrants

The programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

- « PISA for adults »
- Assessment of adult « literacy » and identification of skills used in the workplace
- Data collection in 2011-2012, data file available in 2013
- DG Employment initiative => significant funding of oversampling of immigrants => total immigrant sample of 1200 per country
- PIAAC will be the cross-country data source on immigrant skills and labour market outcomes

Thank you for your attention

www.oecd.org/els/migration

