

The counter-narratives of immigrant students learning the language of schooling in Montreal concerning their experience and placements in relation to the welcoming class

As contranarrativas de estudantes imigrantes que aprendem o idioma escolar em Montreal, referentes à sua experiência e colocação em relação à turma acolhedora

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1 INTRODUCTION

Immigration plays an important role in Canada's demographic and economic growth (INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC, 2023; STATISTICS CANADA, 2022), but immigrant integration remains a challenge (ABU-LABAN et al., 2023). In the specific case of young immigrants who have recently arrived in the country, these individuals face challenges in a variety of spheres, including barriers related to linguistic and cultural adaptation (SHIELDS; LUJAN, 2018). For this reason, those considered as needing to learn

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or improve their skills in the language of schooling are referred to a linguistic (and cultural) integration program. However, there are differences at the provincial level (ARMAND, 2021).

In 1977, the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) came into force in Quebec. Based on the discourse that the rights of French-speaking minorities were under threat, underlining the fragility of the French language in the predominantly English-speaking North American continent, schooling in French became compulsory for students (OAKES; WARREN, 2007). More recently, in 2022, the Charter of the French Language was replaced by an Act, Bill 14, that recognized the official and common language of Quebec, French, in which the discourse of preserving the French language was reaffirmed with new implications, notably for public services aimed at immigrants (e.g., rules against using a language other than French when communicating with them after they have been in Canada for a period of six months) (GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC, 2023). In addition, issues affecting school-age and adult immigrants continue, for example, with cuts to language support services (LA PRESSE CANADIENNE, 2025).

Quebec created the linguistic, academic and social integration program (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT, 2010), favoring the "classe d'accueil", orwelcoming class, model in which learning the language of schooling is carried out separately from the mainstream classroom (ARMAND, 2021). The welcoming class was created in 1969 but has been widespread since the adoption of the Charter of the French Language in 1977 and continues to grow (ARMAND, 2021). So, since the Charter of the French Language came into force, Quebec's French-language school system has become a welcoming place for immigrant students. Indeed, schools have had to adapt to the resulting linguistic, ethnocultural and religious diversity. In addition, since 1998, the Policy on School integration and intercultural education has provided a framework for the implementation of intercultural education (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, 1998) and, more recently, the Policy on Educational Success provides a framework for the implementation of inclusive education (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR, 2017).

In general, in the Montreal metropolitan area, students who are considered as needing support to learn or improve French attend a welcoming class. These students go through two placements: one to enter and another to exit the welcoming class. A welcoming protocol is put in place to assess each student's language skills and decide whether they need to be placed in a welcoming class. After the stay in the welcoming class, students are expected to be referred to the mainstream class (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT, 2010, 2014a).

In 2020, 33% of students in Quebec had an immigrant background and, of these students, 68% were born in Quebec to immigrant parents and 32% were not born in Quebec (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR, 2021). More specifically, in 2018-2019, these students comprised 30.5% of students in the Quebec school system in general youth education, with 11.1% born outside Canada and 19.4% born in Canada, with at least one parent born outside Canada. Most young people from immigrant backgrounds live in Montreal (81.3%), with 52.4% on the island of Montreal and 28.9% in its greater suburbs (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR, 2019). In 2009-2010, non-French-speaking students represented 15% of all students in schools in Quebec and 52% specifically on the island of Montreal (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT, 2014b). Thus, this context and these statistics demonstrate the importance of the French language in Quebec and, specifically of the welcoming class, as well as the high number of immigrant students in Quebec and, specifically in Montreal, a large proportion of whom attend the welcoming class at the start of their schooling.

2 STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLING

In education, most research on the welcoming class or similar models is carried out by second-language didactics scholars and focuses on students' experience to improve integration models (ARMAND; LORY; ROUSSEAU, 2013; TAKEUCHI, 2016). They focus on learning processes and teaching practices. For example, some research emphasizes the importance of language, artistic and cultural awareness activities (ARMAND; LORY; ROUSSEAU, 2013; BEAUREGARD; CARON; CALDAIROU-BESSETTE, 2020; BELAUBRE; RUEFF, 2007; CLERC et al., 2007), while others emphasize the importance of writing and reading development activities for students (ARMAND; SIROIS; ABABOU, 2008; MAYNARD; ARMAND, 2016; VATZ LAAROUSSI et al., 2013) .

Research focusing specifically on the experiences of students learning the language of schooling, highlights on the one hand, a feeling of exclusion due to physical separation at school (HILT, 2017; MOYA; BUTLER-KISBER, 2019; RESCH; GITSCHTHALER; SCHWAB, 2023; RIGGS; DUE, 2011; TERHART; DEWITZ, 2018) and generally a lack of contact with mainstream students (AARSÆTHER, 2021; AMIREAULT; LAMPON-DE SOUZA, 2022; RAZAFIMANDIMBIMANANA; BLANCHET, 2011; STEINBACH, 2010a, 2010b). On the other hand, research underscores their agency in responding to the imposed challenges of integration and academic success (ALLEN, 2006, 2007; COHEN, 2012;

MCCLLOUD, 2015) by mobilizing their family resources (KANOUTÉ et al., 2008), their understanding of their immigration as an opportunity (MICHAEL; ANDRADE; BARTLETT, 2007) and social ties with school actors and peers to navigate the school system (MCCLLOUD, 2015). Furthermore, research shows that students belonging to minority groups (e.g., in terms of race, migratory status, etc.), which is the case of some students in welcoming classes, are over-represented in less prestigious tracks, such as programs for students considered to have learning difficulties (BÉLANGER; TALEB, 2006; HIBEL; JASPER, 2012) and under-represented in more prestigious tracks, such as programs for students considered to be gifted (BIANCO; LEECH, 2010).

Most research on the welcoming class or similar models tends to focus on the perception of school actors, but it is also of utmost importance to consider students' perceptions (RESCH; GITSCHTHALER; SCHWAB, 2023). Furthermore, research on the subject does not generally consider the placement procedures to which students are subjected (MATHIVAT; REY; KLOETZER, 2024). Moreover, research adopting a critical standpoint, focusing on students' counter-narratives (SOLÓRZANO; YOSSO, 2002), is even less numerous, which is the reason why we propose it in this study. The aim of this research is therefore to study the experience of students learning the language of schooling from their counter-narratives concerning their stay in the welcoming class and their placements before and after this stay in Montreal. The focus is on their experiences before, during and after their stay in the welcoming class.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The combination of a few concepts was identified as suitable for analyzing the data in an educational context: the concept of cultural capital (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970), including the concept of transnational habitus (KELLY; LUSIS, 2006); Foucault's definition of disciplinary power and, more specifically, of the system of rewards and punishments connected to disciplinarization (FOUCAULT, 1975); the deficit (DAVIS; MUSEUS, 2019) and hierarchizing (DHAMMOON, 2009) discourse of social actors.

Bourdieu (1986) discusses the different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic), focusing on cultural capital and its connection to habitus. Cultural capital refers to an individual's dispositions (taste, skills, etc.) that are valued within a certain social class. An individual's habitus is inscribed on the body. The habitus and cultural capital of the dominant groups are reproduced, and school is a central institution contributing to this social reproduction (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970; HALLETT; GOUGHERTY, 2018).

Students who have learned the values transmitted by the school at home adapt easily to them, unlike those whose habitus and forms of capital distance themselves from said values. There is therefore an expectation of adaptation to the school (NOWICKA, 2015). Moreover, habitus is transnational, that is, values that immigrants take with them, including in their bodies, can be considered positive or negative depending on what is valued in the host country (KELLY; LUSIS, 2006).

In relation to this requested adaptation, a system of rewards and punishments can be used to encourage adequacy (FOUCAULT, 1975). Disciplinary power, a power exercised through control, surveillance and classification (FOUCAULT, 1975) acts in different spaces, including school (FOUCAULT, 1975). At school, students can be rewarded or punished according to norms to achieve a minimum level of docility and productivity (RYAN, 1991). In fact, teachers and other school workers encourage student conformity by ranking skills, academic performance and behaviors against standards (FORD, 2003).

In addition, the way in which students and their skills are viewed can be connected to a deficit and hierarchical discourse. Individuals belonging to minority groups (e.g., in terms of race, migratory status, etc.) may be understood as possessing “deficiencies” in relation to local norms (DAVIS; MUSEUS, 2019), since local values are understood to be superior to other values (DHAMOON, 2009). This system upholds a meritocratic discourse that (re)produces social inequalities, blaming students (and their parents) instead of focusing on systematic issues (e.g., racism) (DAVIS; MUSEUS, 2019; DHAMOON, 2009).

4 METHODOLOGY

This study presents the results of qualitative ethnographic research adopting an interpretive-critical epistemological perspective (COHEN; MANION; MORRISON, 2017). Semi-structured interviews (MAY, 2011) with seven students were conducted and the data was analyzed from the perspective of counter-narratives (SOLÓRZANO; YOSSO, 2002). Specifically, the life story method focuses on the discursive narration of events to describe a trajectory (BERTAUX, 2016). It can also concern a specific period of life (e.g., childhood) or an aspect of life (e.g., school history) (KRUMER-NEVO; SIDI, 2012). The counter-narratives, that is, the narratives of minority groups (e.g., in terms of race, immigration, language, etc.) tend to be ignored in contrast to the dominant narratives of majority groups (SOLÓRZANO; YOSSO, 2002). This analysis strategy is thus valuable because it reveals hidden (intersectional) mechanisms of inequality and highlights students’ experiences in contrast to dominant narratives (COLLINS, 2024).

Research participants were recruited by means of a call for participation and the snowball technique. The criteria for participation in the research were: 1) to be or to have been a high school student; 2) who has been referred to the welcoming class; 3) in Montreal; and 4) to be at least 18 years old at the time of the interview. The research was approved by the Plurifaculty Research Ethics Committee of the Université de Montréal. For reasons of confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of this committee, participants are identified by pseudonyms. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety. A guide for the interviews was used, focusing on the following three themes: 1) the family experience during childhood and adolescence; 2) school experiences before and during the welcoming class stay; and 3) school experiences after that stay. The interviews were conducted in French, and their extracts were translated to English for the purpose of this publication.

Regarding the students' socio-demographic data, seven high school students (or ex-students) were interviewed, comprising 6 women and 1 man, aged between 18 and 28. As for their country of birth, 2 were born in Sudan, 1 in Benin, 1 in Pakistan, 1 in Côte d'Ivoire, 1 in Mexico and 1 in Venezuela. As for their mother tongues, 2 speak Arabic, 2 Spanish, 1 Fon, 1 Dari and 1 Malinke. As for languages spoken at home, 1 student reports speaking only French, and 1 student reports speaking both French and their mother tongue; the other 5 report speaking exclusively their mother tongues at home. As for languages used daily, all students mention French, of whom 2 speak French exclusively daily, and 5 speak French as well as English and/or their mother tongues daily. As for the highest level of education obtained by at least one of their parents, 4 mention university, 1 mentions secondary school, 1 mentions primary school and 1 has chosen not to divulge this information. Students' educational backgrounds will be detailed in the results session. The research focuses on their educational experience before, during and after their stay in the welcoming class.

5 RESULTS

In this section, the results of the research are discussed concerning immigrant students' counter-narratives about their stay in the welcoming class and their placements before and after that stay. The students' discourses are presented in the form of counter-narratives, dividing them into two types of paths: less tortuous and more tortuous,, in relation to their experience before, during and after their stay in the welcoming class. "More" or "less"

tortuous paths mean “more” or “less” difficult paths from their arrival in the Quebec school system to the classroom where they were placed after their stay in the welcoming class. Due to space limitations, excerpts from the most significant moments in students’ journeys and those that complemented other participants’ counter-narratives were prioritized, thus avoiding possible repetitions of similar experiences.

5.1 Counter-narratives from students who have been through less tortuous paths

In this section, the counter-narratives of Regina, Carlos, Rajaa and Ajah are presented. They were aged between 13 and 16 when they arrived in the welcoming class and spent between one and two school years in the welcoming class. These students have some elements in common: 1) they had no knowledge of the French language when they arrived; 2) their parents had completed university studies; 3) they were placed in the mainstream class at a grade level corresponding to or one year or more below their age.

Regina’s counter-narrative, born in Mexico: adaptative but still a challenging experience

Regina was 16 when she arrived in the welcoming class, where she spent two school years. At the time of the interview, she was in the mainstream class. Before joining the welcoming class, she had already been informed of the need for this placement.: “the school was going to put us in a welcoming class to learn the language before going to the mainstream class”. She felt that the assessment was not thorough: “The lady asked me a question, what’s your name or something like that [...]. The only way they knew I didn’t speak French was that I didn’t answer the question”. At the start of her stay in the welcoming class, speaking other languages was not allowed in class: “the teacher, she forced us to speak in French, even if nobody in the class spoke French”. She believed the amount of time she stayed in the welcoming class was excessive: “my friends in Mexico had already finished school last year, a year before me, so I was eager to finish too, and I thought it was a bit of a waste of time”. Comparing the welcoming class and the mainstream class, she says she notices a lack of “patience” on the part of teachers and peers in the mainstream class: “they don’t have the same patience with us who don’t speak the language too well”. Thus, she feels the need to remind them of her educational background: “I feel obliged to say that I don’t speak French perfectly, or that I wasn’t born here, or that I come from the welcoming class, even to the teachers”.

Carlos' counter-narrative, born in Venezuela: added supportive services experience

Carlos was 16 when he arrived in the welcoming class, where he spent two school years. At the time of the interview, he was in the mainstream class. Before his stay in the welcoming class, he had not taken a written test, which he took to mean that he had not taken a French test: "I didn't take a French test". He says that he was sent to the welcoming class because he had to: "I didn't speak French, [...] so I had to go to the welcoming class to learn the language first and then go to the mainstream class". At the start of his stay in the welcoming class, he believed his teacher was strict: "I remember that my first teacher, she was very strict, not with me, but with certain peers in my class, so it was something that intimidated me a lot". According to him, this teacher was strict (e.g., shouting) with students who didn't follow the rules (e.g., doing homework, arriving on time, etc.): "the students who are quiet, who are silent, who pay attention to class, she treats well, compared to the students who have bad habits in the classroom". His experience of learning French generated anxiety, for which he received psychological and speech therapy: "problems like the anxiety I had in my French lessons". In his case, the negative consequences of putting French-speaking and non-French-speaking students in the same welcoming class are noticeable: "I have peers of Algerian origin, so they speak French, and every time I need to do an activity with them where it's just talking, I find difficulties". In the mainstream class, he continues to receive speech therapy. It should be noted that he has been placed below his age level: "I'm 18, this is the fourth year of secondary school in which I'm studying with 15 and 16-year-olds".

Rajaa's counter-narrative, born in Sudan: "working hard" as a strategy experience

Rajaa was 13 when she arrived in the welcoming class, where she spent one school year. At the time of the interview, she was in the mainstream class. Before her stay in the welcoming class, she did not speak French: "It was really a new language for me. It was the first time I'd heard it". During her stay in the welcoming class, she says she participated in class and even did more than her teacher asked: "I like to work, I like to participate, so I often asked for more work to improve". She recalls that the teacher used to give rewards to the students to encourage them: "He gave us rewards to encourage us to speak French, like sweets". After her stay in the welcoming class, she felt anxious when interacting with peers: "I had the impression that no one understood me when I spoke". She compares the welcoming class to the mainstream class: "It was different in the mainstream class, of course, because you weren't supervised like in the welcoming class". However, in the

mainstream class, she continues to devote a great deal of time to her studies, asking for help when needed: “I’m a person who goes to every lunch hour support sessions, so all the teachers know me. [...] I spend my lunch hours there because I have a lot of questions.

Ajah’s counter-narrative, born in Sudan: partial integration/ language support experience

Ajah was 15 when she arrived in the welcoming class, where she spent one school year. At the time of the interview, she was completing her college studies. Before her stay in the welcoming class, she says she did not take a French test, but she did take a math test in French: “They asked me if I knew any French. I said no, so they didn’t give me a French placement test [...], but they gave me a math test, and it was in French”. Her stay in the welcoming class went well. She speaks of it as being a “little family”: “In the welcoming class, because there are fewer people, [...] you’re closer to the teacher, [...] I felt we were all one family, a little family”. According to her, her partial integration into the mainstream classroom generated anxiety, but was also helpful: “I was a bit scared, [but] it helped a lot, because it prepared me”. She also received language support in the mainstream class: “the support helped me a lot. [...] The things I didn’t understand, we did together”.

5.2 Counter-narratives from students who have been through more tortuous paths

In this section, the counter-narratives of Ianna, Akissi and Awaiza are presented. They were between 14 and 15 years old when they arrived in the welcoming class and have spent between one and three school years in the welcoming class. These students have some elements in common: 1) they reported having some knowledge of the French language when they arrived in the local school system; 2) their parents did not have a university education (although one of these students did not wish to disclose her parents’ level of education); 3) they were directed to paths other than the mainstream classroom (partial integration, special education or general adult education). However, one of these students was placed in the mainstream class one year below her age level (the reasons for her placement under the more tortuous paths will be explained in more detail later).

Ianna’s counter-narrative, born in Benin: learning difficulties experience

Ianna was 15 when she arrived in the welcoming class, where she spent less than a school year. At the time of the interview, she had already finished college. However, her school journey was more complicated than

this seemingly smooth summary. Prior to her stay in the welcoming class, after taking a test, she was informed that she “had difficulties”: “based on that test, they just decided to give me the connotation of a student with a disability or difficulty of some kind”. When she arrived in the welcoming class, her teacher was surprised because she had been informed that Ianna did not speak French: “I arrived in her class, and she was trying to make herself understood by speaking French to me very slowly. I said [in French]: ‘Hello, I understand very well what you are saying. [Laughs]’”. Once directed to the mainstream class, she subsequently failed some subjects: “at the end of the year, I had passed some subjects, others not”. After a year in the mainstream class, because of her age and “difficulties”, the guidance counsellor suggested that she take a vocational training program in the special education sector: “the guidance counsellor met me and said, ‘what I’m proposing, given your difficulties, is that you go into [name of program]’. It’s like vocational training [...] with young people who have difficulties”. Neither she nor her parents understood the placement choice proposed, but they accepted it. Then, by chance, she met her former welcoming class teacher, who suggested general adult education instead: “She said to me: ‘No, no, no, you’re not going into [name of program]’ [...]. It would be better if you went to adult education to continue your studies”. Again, neither she nor her parents understood the placement choice proposed, but they accepted it. Ianna mentions that the guidance counselor’s decision was taken without knowing her: “the guidance counselor in fact, who doesn’t know me, who has never met me...” and without her parents being present: “I wasn’t even accompanied by my parents, I was alone during this meeting. Half the things I didn’t understand”. In her opinion, the advisor could have offered other options: “Just offering one choice is something, no, it’s not adequate. [...] The proof: that’s not what I’m doing right now”.

Akissi’s counter-narrative, born in Côte d’Ivoire: French-speaking experience

Akissi was 15 when she arrived in the welcoming class, where she spent one and a half school years. At the time of the interview, she was in the mainstream class. Her case is notable as a French speaker. According to her, despite being French speaking, she had to spend almost two school years in the welcoming class: “I did a year and a half, like two years or so”. She talks about the test taken before her stay in the welcoming class: “They gave me a French test. [...] They said no, I must go to the welcoming class, because the test I had done, I think it was full of mistakes”. She thought she was going to get a good mark in the test, but this was not the case: “when I took

the test, I thought I was going to get a good mark, because I did it my way, but the answer they wanted, that's not how I took my test". She also talks about difficulties in math: "I really had difficulty in maths too, because it also depended on how the teacher explained the lesson". She was placed in the mainstream class below her age level: "Well, my age was still higher".

Awaiza's counter-narrative, born in Pakistan: academic delay experience

Awaiza was 14 when she arrived in the welcoming class, where she spent three school years. At the time of the interview, she was in a partial integration model. Initially, she was referred to a welcoming class for students considered to be behind academically: "it's a welcoming class, it's just that it's for students who have just arrived in Canada, and they have missed years [of schooling]". Thus, her counter-narrative shows yet another division inside the division of the welcoming class. She also mentioned her behavior. When talking about rewards and punishments in class, she says they did not work well for her: "Rewards are good for students who were good and quiet. For me, I don't think so, because I'm not calm". She also experienced partial integration. She went through different levels in the welcoming class until she was sent to a partial integration model in which she takes subjects in the mainstream classroom: "it's just French [...], but the others, I do subject like maths, history, science, in the mainstream class". Considering all the changes she has gone through, she has had five French teachers in the welcoming class: "In French, I had 1-2-3, until now 4, 5 [teachers]". At the time of the interview, she was still waiting for full integration into a mainstream class, but she was already 18.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Several elements can be noted from the analysis of the research findings. Students (and their parents) do not appear to be properly informed about the workings of the school system, the welcoming class and the placement procedures. For example, students reported that they did not fully understand the placement tests, and that they felt that the way they answered the tests was not considered correct by those assessing their language skills. Students and immigrant parents not being properly informed about local school system has also been highlighted by research (CUKO, 2016). During initial evaluations, some students were told that they "had difficulties" or that they were behind the Quebec academic norm (in academic delay). Immigrant students being judged as having learning disabilities have also been identified by research (CAROTHERS; PARFITT, 2017).

Once in the welcoming class, the participants informed us that they were told that the stay in the welcoming class was an “obligation” they had to fulfil to be able to study in the mainstream class. Some students mentioned that their teachers did not allow them to speak in their mother tongues in class, a finding that has been corroborated by other research (AHOAJA; BALLINGER, 2022). In terms of behavioral requirements, according to the participant students, teachers tended to use a system of rewards and punishments. For example, receiving candy when they did what was expected (e.g., participating in class, doing homework, etc.) or being yelled at when they did what was not expected (e.g., speaking their native language in class, etc.). It should be noted that a system of rewards and punishments is a common technique used in schools to manage students’ participation in class (ISKANDAR et al., 2024). Furthermore, some students mentioned feeling scared and were even referred to additional support language services (e.g., psychology, speech therapy) to manage their anxiety and so-called language “challenges”, which can be considered a deficit-thinking approach to dealing with immigrant students (SOARES, 2025). Finally, some students reported perceiving their time in the welcoming class as a waste of time or of falling behind academically. Other research has mentioned how separated language models can be viewed by students and their parents as a waste of time, especially in case of academic delay (ALLEN, 2006).

Comparing the welcoming class and the mainstream class, the participants reported that teachers and students in the welcoming class are “nicer”, and the welcoming class is like a “little family”. Conversely, in the mainstream class, they feel more external pressure to speak the language well. They also feel the need to remind teachers and peers in the mainstream class that they are still students in the process of learning the language of schooling, a process that takes from 5 to 7 years, according to research (CUMMINS, 2003). In general, the participants reported feeling less supported in the mainstream classroom than in the welcoming class. After a year or more in the welcoming class, some students were placed in the mainstream class (generally below their age level), but some students took paths other than the mainstream class (general adult education, special education or partial integration). More precisely, according to the students’ counter-narratives, neither they nor their parents seemed to have a proper understanding of the options available for their studies, especially after their stay in the welcoming class. Thus, they tend to accept the recommendations of the school actors without questions. Other research has also highlighted the importance of properly informing immigrant parents about the host education system and listening to them (SOARES et al., 2023), since positive collaboration with parents can influence school success (NOROZI, 2023).

According to our analysis, the data highlights the importance of parents' educational capital in the school experience of the students interviewed and, consequently, in their placements, since those whose parents have higher educational capital (university studies) reported having had a less difficult school journey, and those whose parents had lower educational capital (college studies and less) reported having had a more difficult journey. Some of them seem to respond better to school expectations (e.g., asking for help when needed instead of waiting to receive help, etc.). Analysis of the data indicates that those who already have a quality education (which may be associated with their parents' educational capital), seem to respond more readily to school expectations. This may therefore be transferable for some students (that is, even if they are immigrants), because it involves shared values (e.g., doing homework as required, etc.). For these students, the fact that the habitus is transnational helps (KELLY; LUSIS, 2006). Thus, those who already possess what is required by the school, succeed at school and those who do not possess it, tend not to achieve academic success (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970). However, even if the stay in the welcoming class is not enough to achieve success (for those who do not meet school expectations), it does serve to teach students the host society's behavioral requirements (e.g., speaking only in the required language, etc.). These behaviors are taught mainly through a system of rewards and punishments, making the welcoming class a disciplinary space (FOUCAULT, 1975). In fact, these students would be understood by the school system as having "shortcomings": lack of mastery of the language of schooling and lack of understanding of how the school and local culture work, which would justify their "need" for "linguistic, school and social integration" (MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT, 2010). Therefore, this discourse on the part of the host society and its school actors, especially during immigrant students' assessments and placements, can be identified as being both deficit-thinking (DAVIS; MUSEUS, 2019) and hierarchical (DHAMMOON, 2009). Other research has suggested that school actors consider immigrant students' "ability" to speak French as a way of measuring their success. In this sense, "deficiency" in French would indicate "deficiency" as learners in general (AHOOJA; BALLINGER, 2022). As a result, the discourse of the "need" to master the French language tends to occur without highlighting other knowledge and skills of the students (AHOOJA; BALLINGER, 2022).

In terms of the limits of this research, it would be interesting to interview more students, and to find out what their parents and school workers think about the subject at hand. These topics could be addressed in future research. However, this research broke new ground in different ways. This research demonstrated the importance of positive connections with teachers and peers for the well-being of students learning the language

of schooling in both the welcoming class and the mainstream class (BAUER; AEBISCHER; RIBET, 2021). In addition, as in this research, other research has also highlighted that students understand the mainstream class rather than the welcoming class (or other similar models) as a space for inclusion, even if the mainstream class represents a challenge (e.g., in terms of language and connections with teachers and peers) (FANDREM et al., 2024). However, research tends not to adopt a critical perspective, especially from the counter-narratives of minority students (SOLÓRZANO; YOSSO, 2002). Moreover, research on the subject often focuses on school actors. Consequently, studies have highlighted the importance of examining the experience of students (RESCH; GITSCHTHALER; SCHWAB, 2023). These elements constitute the major asset of this research: carrying out a critical analysis and focusing on the experience of students learning the language of schooling. In this sense, in terms of recommendations, it is essential that school actors also focus on students' experience.

Firstly, it is important to explain to students and their parents the procedures for placing students before and after their stay in the welcoming class. Secondly, it is suggested that they are involved in the decision-making, since these decisions influence the students' school journey and even beyond. Finally, a critical and in-depth reflection is proposed on decisions choosing long stays in the welcoming class, placement below the age level of students in the mainstream class, placement in sectors other than the mainstream class (special education and adult education) and even the choice of the welcoming class model.

NEM AQUI, NEM LÁ: VERTIGEM NO POSICIONAMENTO

Eu tive que escrever uma poesia sem rima
por mim, pra mim.

Primeiro eu tive que escolher uma língua,
depois, um lugar.

Mas não, não há escolha.
É um acúmulo de línguas, de lugares.
Intersecção de opressões e privilégios.

Eu acertei no título: nem aqui, nem lá.
Vertigem constante no posicionamento.
Posicionamento na pesquisa e na vida.

Vida no Norte, mas o Sul global fica.
O Sul global nunca foi tão presente.
O Sul alimenta pra sobreviver no Norte

Pé no Norte e mente e coração no Sul.
Zumbido interno a cada passo não vão.

Só entende realmente quem experiencia.
O que é ser imigrante. i'm migraine.
E nunca deixar de ser "recém-chegada".

É tudo mesmo sobre... acolhimento.
Ou falta de. Acolhimento e cuidado.
Não era pra ser sobre assimilação.
Não era pra ser sobre adaptação.
Não era pra ser só sobre vocês,
mesmo se a casa é sua.
Su casa, mi casa?

As regras são suas, né?
Os valores são seus.

Mas a gente continua existindo aqui.
Com toda a complexidade e riqueza
Que alguns amam e outros odeiam.

E a gente continua cantando e dançando.
Por nós, pra nós. Nós? Vocês? Quem?

Normalização, disciplina dos corpos.
Habitús, tipos de capital. Práticas.
Estigmatização. Ordem interacional.
Tudo junto e misturado. Palavras ao léu.

Só mais uma vez, traduzo pra vocês.
Mas o original fica na minha língua.
Aviso: parte da beleza se perde na tradução.

Reconheço a falta de rima e métrica,
Reconheço os versos bagunçados,
Mas a falta de estilo é o meu estilo.
O único estilo possível no Norte-Sul.

Roberta Soares

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the counter-stories of immigrant students learning the language of schooling in Montreal, focusing on their stay in the welcoming class and the placement assigned to them before and after this stay. We conducted semi-structured interviews (MAY, 2011) with seven students and analyzed the data using a counter-storytelling framework (SOLÓRZANO; YOSSO, 2002). Our analysis highlights the influence of cultural capital (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970) in transnational educational trajectories (KELLY; LUSIS, 2006), the use of disciplinary techniques (FOUCAULT, 1975) in the welcoming class learning processes, and the prevalence of deficit-based (DAVIS; MUSEUS, 2019) and hierarchical discourses (DHAMOON, 2009) in student evaluations and placements. Since their arrival in the Quebec school system, some students have experienced more difficult educational paths than others due to the academic requirements they are expected to meet in order to succeed.

Keywords: Linguistic integration, Immigration, Welcoming class, Wnclusion, Canada.

RESUMO

Este estudo qualitativo analisa os contrarrelatos de alunos imigrantes em processo de aprendizagem da língua de escolarização em Montreal (Canadá), a respeito de suas experiências na classe de acolhimento e das classificações recebidas antes e após essa etapa. Realizamos entrevistas semiestruturadas (MAY, 2011) com sete alunos e analisamos os dados a partir da perspectiva dos contrarrelatos (SOLÓRZANO; YOSSO, 2002). A análise destaca o peso do capital cultural (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970) nas trajetórias transnacionais (KELLY; LUSIS, 2006), o uso da disciplinarização (FOUCAULT, 1975) no processo de aprendizagem na classe de acolhimento, bem como a presença de um discurso deficitário (DAVIS; MUSEUS, 2019) e hierarquizante (DHAMOON, 2009) nas avaliações e classificações dos alunos. Desde suas chegadas ao sistema escolar do Quebec, alguns alunos enfrentaram trajetórias mais difíceis do que outros, em função das exigências escolares impostas para alcançar o sucesso acadêmico.

Palavras-chave: Integração linguística, Imigração, Classe de acolhimento, Inclusão, Canadá.