



Lunch & Learn: Work-Integrated French-Language Training in the Québec Context

Sta Kuzviwanza, Director of Policy and Research, PERT

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Presentation Overview

1. About PERT
2. Employment Situation of English speakers in Québec
3. Work-Integrated French-Language Training
4. Upcoming Projects
5. Q&A

About PERT



Our Mission

The Provincial Employment Roundtable is a non-profit multi-stakeholder initiative focused on addressing the employment and employability challenges facing Québec's English-speaking community. Through our research and stakeholder work, we engage all levels of policymakers to develop solutions and ensure adequate resources to improve the labour market outcomes of English-speaking Quebecers.



Employment situation of English speakers in Québec



Fast Facts

- English speakers make up **14.9%** of Québec's total population, but **22.7%** of the **unemployed population**
- English-speaking Quebecers have an **unemployment rate of 10.9%**, 4 percentage points higher than that of French speakers (6.9%)
- English speakers make **\$5,200 less in median employment income** (\$32,000 compared to \$37,200)
- Approximately **9.3% of English speakers live below the low-income cut-off (LICO)**, almost double the proportion of French speakers (4.8%)
- **64.8% of English speakers are bilingual** compared to 48.9% of French speakers

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021).



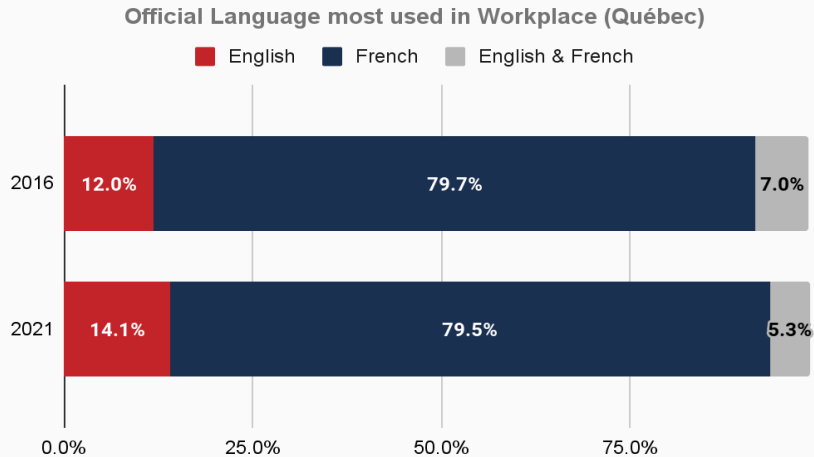
Issues and Needs

Overall Challenges	Work activity	Educational attainment
Lack of awareness of employment and French-language training services	Lack of employment support for management level jobs	Learning opportunities in regions mostly not available in English
Labour shortages in regions despite high unemployment	Temporary seasonal work leads to income gaps	Lack of educational options create natural exodus for certain regions
More functional and professional-related language training needed	More people taking on multiple low-paying jobs to support family	Less access to vocational training leading to lower chances of work opportunities
Infrastructure need in regions inhibits access to services	Prevalence of gig economy in regions (EI/welfare mentality)	Studying elsewhere and having to pass exams upon return to region
Outmigration due to language requirement	More focus on work than study leading to low-paying jobs	Foreign education accreditation process can be difficult leading to newcomers becoming overqualified and underemployed
More networks/social circles needed to encourage job success/community vitality	Telework limited only to white-collar professions / benefits rarely available for most working people	Lack of upskilling/reskilling opportunities in most regions
Lack of wraparound supports (mental health/child care/transportation/affordable housing)	Alleged hiring prejudice/discrimination when employers notice accents	Lack of opportunities/encouragement for underrepresented groups

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable. [Forthcoming]. *Employment Profile Of English Speakers In The Province of Québec*. Working Paper.



French remains language used most frequently at work



- 2021 Census: **668,485** Québecers (**14.1%**) reported using English most frequently at work, an increase of **2%** from 2016.
- The use of both languages in Québec's workplace slightly dropped from **7%** in 2016 to **5.3%** in 2021.
- However, the use of French language at work remains relatively unchanged compared to 2016. With approximately **80%**, French remains the dominant language in Québec's workplace.

Work-Integrated French-Language Training



Why Work-Integrated FSL Training?

Work-integrated programs are important for language learners who are facing employment barriers or seeking to improve their employability as they can:

- Take multiple formats, including individuals learning French directly on the job, or taking courses during working hours at the permission of (and at times funded by) the employers.
- Serve as an inclusive model that can accommodate students, workers, and job seekers who require workplace-specific vocabulary and language skills.
- Be used to address existing labour shortages through language training programs for in-demand occupations such as nursing, construction, and services.

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2023). *Learning French as an Adult: A Review of Current Best Practices in Adult French-language Training in Québec*. https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Learning-French-As-an-Adult_EN_Final.pdf



Research Objectives

Community priority

- Challenges experienced when accessing F2L training, as well as linguistic barriers to the labour market.

We wanted to know more

- What are the experiences of English-speaking Quebecers navigating the province's F2L ecosystem and French-language labour market?

Very little literature

- On the subject of French-as-a-second-Language (F2L) training in Québec, particularly for English speakers, adults, and individuals in the workforce.



Research Objectives

Our F2L portfolio seeks to gain insight into the current resources offered to English speakers looking to improve their French skills, as well as their experiences navigating Québec's French-language learning ecosystem. We additionally seek to understand the best ways to deliver F2L training in Québec.

Through our research, we aim to:

- Increase understanding of the linguistic needs of English speakers in the labour market
- Help lower the existing linguistic barriers to the labour market
- Increase access to French-language training for English-speaking adults, particularly in the labour market



Research Methodologies

700+ English speakers
surveyed

150+ interviews with French-
language learners and
subject matter experts

Literature reviews

3 cases studies of FSL
programs



What we did

2022

- French-language training for the workforce in Québec (inventory of FLWPs)
- French-language support for Québec's English-speaking professionals (professional orders)

2023

- Learning French as an adult: A review of current best practices in adult French-language training in Québec
- Québec and the rest: A survey of national and international approaches to adult language training

2024

- User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French-language training ecosystem (forthcoming)
- Understanding learning timelines for working adults in second language training (forthcoming)



Employment Issues and Needs of English speakers (Survey)



Research findings: Employment Issues and Needs of English speakers

- In 2021, PERT conducted a two-part survey of:
 - English-speaking Quebecers
 - Employment organizations serving English-speakers
 - 259 individual responses and 29 responses from organizations

The goal was to identify the primary employment issues and needs facing English speakers in Québec's labour market.

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT). ["2021 Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations."](#)

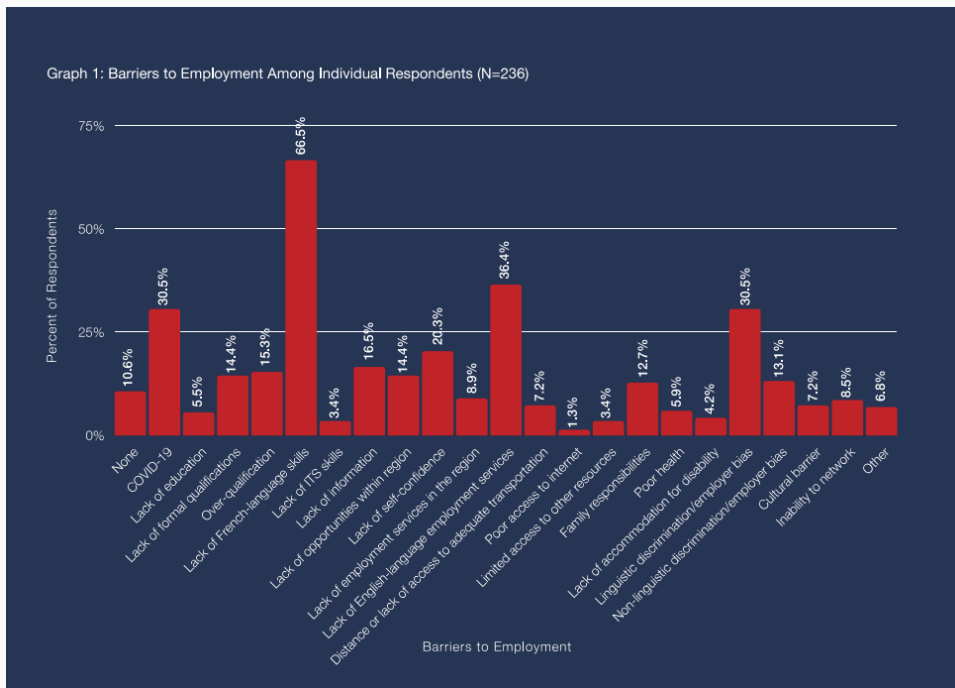


Employment Issues and Needs of English speakers: Individuals

- Close to 70% of English-speaking individual respondents cite inadequate French language skills as an obstacle to employment.
- 76% agree that French language proficiency impacted the hiring process; 56% of survey participants perceive companies' preference for prospective candidates with a high level of French/English bilingualism



Employment Issues and Needs of English speakers: Individuals



- 66.5% of respondents to our survey indicate they had experienced a **lack of French language skills** as a barrier.
- This **remains true** across the gender spectrum, for visible minorities, and those living in rural areas.



Employment Issues and Needs of English speakers: Individuals

- More than half of respondents (**50.91%**) think that their accent **negatively impacted** a hiring decision.
- Almost **65%** of respondents think that their level of French language proficiency has **narrowed** their range of **employment prospects**.



When asked about taking French-language learning courses...

“I have been attempting to increase my French speaking and writing skills independently in order to find a job with more stability and higher pay as it is difficult to rise in my field with only English. This is difficult as working full time takes away a lot of mental and physical energy to learn the language.”

- Individual respondent



English Speakers and Employment Challenges: Organizations

Organizations' survey responses:

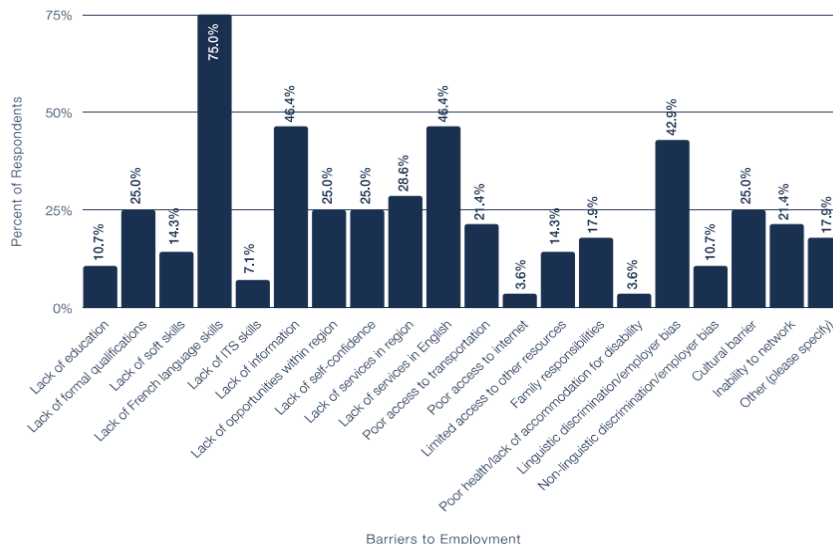
- **80%** cite lack of French language skills as a barrier to employment. Lack of services in English is the second most answer (57%).
- **53%** of respondents perceive French language proficiency assessments as fair.
- Despite being willing to provide French language support for English-speaking employees, lack of organizational capacity prevents organizations from doing so (61.54% are inclined to do with the necessary resources)



Organizations echo individuals' responses: lack of French-language skills a barrier

- According to employment service providers, the most significant barrier to employment is the **lack of French language skills (75%)**.
- A **lack of networking** and the ability to form close relationships were a distant second and third.

Graph 2: Barriers to Employment According to Organizations (N=28)





Research objectives: Best Practices

- Assess and define the best learning approaches and practices in French-language programming in Québec, especially for English-speaking adults trying to integrate into the labour market.



Research findings: Best practices in Québec

There are a number of adult language learning best practices the government can adopt to improve our approach to adult language learning.

These include: plurilingualism, cultural exchange, confidence building, and lifelong learning.

Many of these best practices such are already being implemented in existing programs in Québec.

These programs, use a variety of pedagogical approaches and program designs to facilitate positive language learning outcomes.

In order to improve adult language learning in Québec, **these programs should be expanded and implemented across Québec.**

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2023). *Québec and the rest: A survey of national and international approaches to adult language training*. <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Quebec-and-the-rest-A-survey-of-national-and-international-approaches-to-adult-language-training.pdf>



Research objectives: Competencies

- Understand average learning times and efforts for adult second-language acquisition (SLA) programming
- Understand the factors that affect SLA learning time and outcomes
- Understand the different definitions, measurements, and complexities involved in “fluency” and “competencies” for SLA
- Understand work-integrated SLA and its impact on learning outcomes



Research findings: Competencies

- The length of time it takes to reach functional proficiency in a foreign language varies. **Programs intended to develop functional proficiency spanned from 530 to over 1000 hours**
- **Internal factors** (learner-specific factors) affecting learners' experiences and outcomes include:
 - motivation
 - time devoted
 - prior languages
 - age
 - identity and attitudes
 - disability and neurodivergence
- **External factors** affecting learning experiences and outcomes include:
 - social class
 - structure and goal of language programs
 - environment
- **Immersive experiences tend to improve spoken proficiency, while classroom instruction positively impacts written proficiency**
- In workplaces, employers and coworkers can positively impact the language learning process by developing a workplace culture that embraces language learning

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable. [Forthcoming]. *Understanding Learning Timelines for Adults in Second Language Training*. Working Paper.



Research objectives: User journeys

- Understand the user-journeys of different groups and their progression through the FLL ecosystem
- Deepen our understanding of potential barriers to access F2L training
- Understand what types of programs users accessed or want to access
- Understand users' motivations, attitudes, and objectives for enrolling in F2L training
- Understand how access to F2L training affects employment and employability



Research findings: User journeys

- We identified **three types of language learners**:
 - Interprovincial migrants
 - International students, and
 - Québec-born English speakers
- Participants described an initial **enthusiasm for learning or improving their French**
- Participants viewed **French as a necessity to get a job in Québec**
- Participants described **heightened anxiety interacting with native speakers** which negatively impacted their motivation and experience of learning French
- Other barriers included:
 - Findability
 - Accessibility of programs (e.g. location, language of promotion)
 - Eligibility
- **Need for diverse programming** that meets users' different experiences and skill levels

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable. [Forthcoming]. *User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French-language training ecosystem*. Working Paper.



Recommendations

Some of our recommendations:

- Establishing a province-wide network of French-language assessment and referral centres to provide free and affordable assessments for all Québec residents in partnership with community organizations, schools, and language centres
- Regularly collecting and publishing linguistic data in Québec in order to track French-language competency levels
- Developing and implementing a strategy to better leverage technology to improve learner outcomes.
- Increased investments to support the education workforce
- Creating volunteer language training programs to match language learners with fluent French language speakers
- Improving the francisation website by enhancing its usability, navigation, and comprehensiveness as a one-stop-shop online government platform that provides all resources and information related to adult French-language training in Québec.

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2023). *Québec and the rest: A survey of national and international approaches to adult language training*. <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Quebec-and-the-rest-A-survey-of-national-and-international-approaches-to-adult-language-training.pdf>



Recommendations cont'd

While some employers do provide work-integrated language training to their employees, more investments are needed in to the promotion of these programs to encourage more employers to enroll. Thus, there is a need to:

- a) Expand existing programs, making them more inclusive, while having some that are universal and some that are more targeted
- b) Increase their availability by developing and funding programs for job-specific French-language training and French-language work placement programs.
- c) Improve employers and employees awareness of these kinds of programs and the subsidies related to them as well as the findability of these resources
- d) Incentivize employees and employers to enroll and participate in work-integrated French-language training programs
- e) Foster greater collaboration between government agencies, community organizations, schools, and other organizations in the ecosystem with the goal of developing more robust programs

Sources: Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *French-Language Training for the Workforce: A review of French-language training programs for the workforce in Québec*. <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FSL-Inventory-Assessment-Report.pdf>, Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2023). *Learning French as an Adult: A Review of Current Best Practices in Adult French-language Training in Québec*. https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Learning-French-As-an-Adult_EN_Final.pdf

What's Next?

Research Project: Survey of over 600 English-speaking Quebecers on their French-language needs

- Conduct a survey of at least 600 English-speaking Quebecers living in the regions of Quebec on their French-language learning needs.
- Better understanding of the French learning needs of English-speaking Quebecers
- Analyze survey results and identify key issues and needs to identify the French learning needs of English-speaking Quebecers
- 1 report containing a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results of the survey of at least 600 English-speaking Quebecers in all regions

Research Project: English speakers with low proficiency in French

- Develop a profile of English-speaking Quebecers who report low proficiency in French.
- Understand characteristics of (sector of activity, occupational status, regional location, etc.) of English-speaking Quebecers with low-proficiency in French
- 1 report containing a quantitative analysis of English-speaking Quebecers in the workforce with low proficiency in French



Research Project: Employer Perspectives

This research project investigates the attitudes and experiences of employers in regard to accessing and integrating French-language learning programming and/or resources into their workplaces. It aims to identify barriers, issues, incentives and disincentives and propose solutions.





Call for Research Participants:

Employer Perspectives on Hiring & Training French Language Learners

Scan the QR code to take the survey or sign-up for an interview or focus group!

- Open to decision-makers and employees with insights on their workplace's hiring practices, professional development, EDI activities.
- People from organizations of all regions, industries, and sizes operating across Québec are invited to respond.

Survey - 5 minutes

Interview - 15-45 minutes

Employer Focus group - 60 minutes





Pilot Program: Workforce Development Strategies

This pilot program informs and accompanies employers to access French-language training services for their employees. 40 employers, divided into four cohorts of 8-12 each, will participate in guided sessions providing information and support on best practices for integrating French-language training in the workplace, as well as information and support to integrate and retain linguistic minorities in the workplace.





Pilot Program: Workforce Development Strategies

If you are interested in the pilot program and would like to learn more about it and or express interest in participating in it, please scan the following QR code.





Coming Soon: Mentorship Program

The proposed project will provide informal French-language learning opportunities to participants across Québec to improve their profession-specific spoken French-language competencies and linguistic confidence and support their integration into French-language professional networks. The project has two complementary components: a mentorship program delivered virtually, and in-person professional networking events.





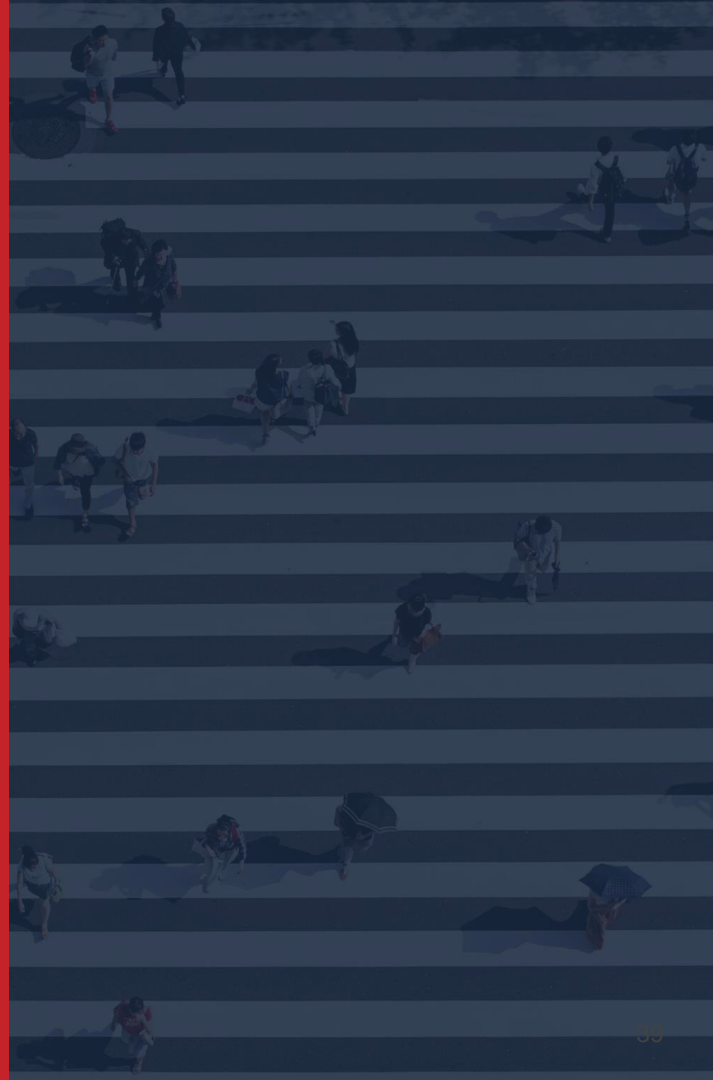
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Q&A