

Language, Health, and Active Offer

ARC Navigator Training

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Objectives

At the end of the next 2 hours, you will...

- ◎ **Understand the influence of language on health, and on access to health and social services**
- ◎ **Know some of the characteristics of the Official Language Minority Communities of Canada**
- ◎ **Understand Active Offer, and how to apply this concept in your position as a Navigator**

What is your experience?

What languages
do you speak?



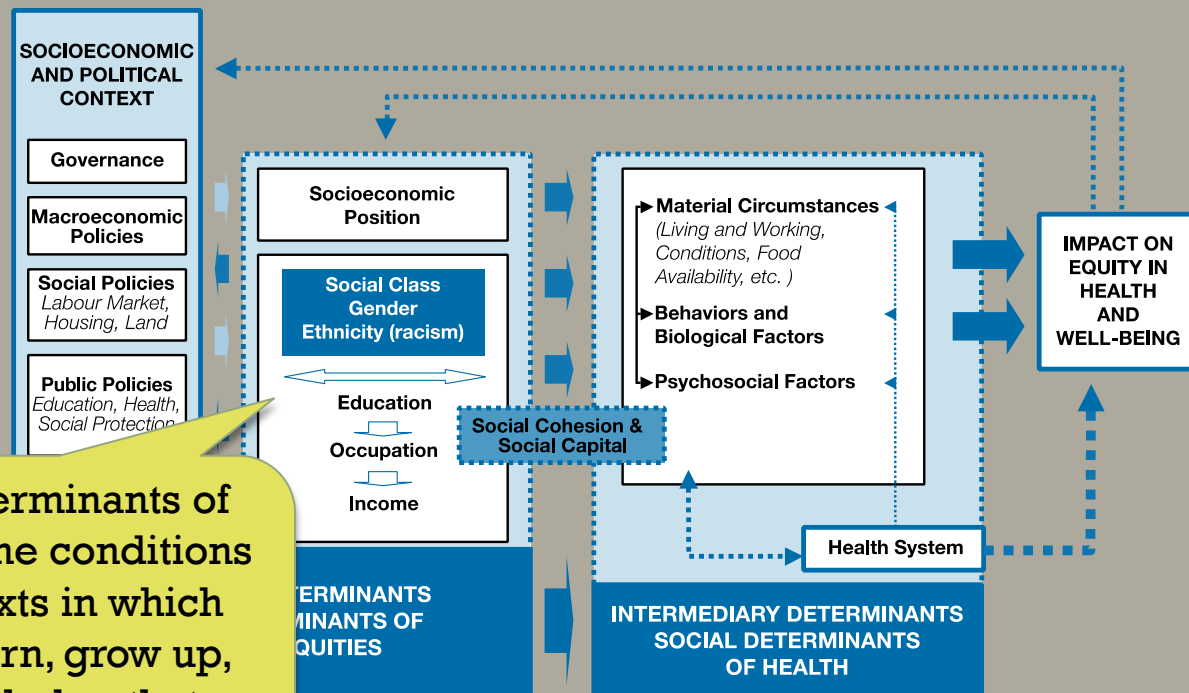
What is your experience?

Have you ever been in a situation where you did not understand what was being said or could not be understood?



Language: a social determinant of health?

Figure A. Final form of the CSDH conceptual framework



Social determinants of health are the conditions and contexts in which you are born, grow up, work, and play, that influence your health.

Language: a social determinant of health?

Research is beginning to show us that language should be recognized as a social determinant of health.

What is your experience?

In your opinion, how might language be a social determinant of health?



A testimony

**My health, my language - Mona Mercier's
testimony**

<https://vimeo.com/118607210>

What do you think?

What are your thoughts about
Mona's experience?

Might there be a link between
health and safety?



Language and health

There is an association between language barriers and...

- ◆ Difficulties with medication compliance (Wilson et al., 2005)
- ◆ Lower use of preventive health services, family doctor visits, and mental health services (Bowen, 2015)
- ◆ Difficulties with assessments and goal setting in rehabilitation services (Taylor and Jones 2014)

Language and health

There is an association between language barriers and...

- ◆ Challenges accessing community services (e.g. organizing services, filling in benefits forms) post-stroke (Mold et al., 2006)

...and the list goes on.

Language and health

You have to take the medication 3 times per day! And if you miss one, do not take it right away, you must skip it...

Do you understand?

Yes...

Ich verstehe nichts...Drei mal...? Was?



Language and health

Language influences
client **safety**, and the **quality** of services

Is this an issue of health
equity?

What do you think?

Might there be other reasons why understanding could be affected?



Language and health

Language barrier: decreased ability to understand because the preferred languages of communication are different

Literacy: ability to read and write

Health literacy: ability to understand or act on medical/therapeutic instructions based on a combination of socio-economic status, culture, and language factors (Shaw, Huebner, Armin, Orzech, & Vivian, 2009).

Languages in Canada

What is the language of the majority in Canada?

How many minority languages do we have?



Languages in Canada: a bit of history



The Death of General Wolfe, Benjamin West (1770), National Gallery of Canada

Languages in Canada

1969:

The federal government declares that Canada is a bilingual country. The two official languages are English and French.

1982:

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Liberties declares that English and French have equal status.

Languages in Canada


The numbers:

- Approximately 1,000,000 francophones live outside of Québec.

http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/sc/video/po_lmc

In the Ottawa-Gatineau region, Arabic and Spanish are the most reported languages spoken at home, other than French and English

Languages in Canada



1986: *French Language Services Act* is a law that guarantees services in French from all the provincial ministries in the 26 designated areas where 80% of francophones reside.

Languages in Canada

- ◎ Nearly 5% of the population of Ontario, and 18% of the population of Ottawa identifies as being francophone.

[http://csfontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2014.09.18-Francophones-in-Ontario_infographic J.pdf](http://csfontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2014.09.18-Francophones-in-Ontario_infographic_J.pdf)

Official minority language groups

	Francophone minority	Anglophone majority	Anglophone minority	Francophone majority
	Outside of Québec		In Québec	
Poor self-reported health status	17,64 %	13,26%	12,44%	14,11%
>2 chronic diseases	20,08%	17,17%	15,66%	20,26%
Decreased function in everyday activities	18,28%	15,96%	14,69%	16,33%

Bouchard, Gaboury, Chomienne, Gilbert, Dubois. (2009). La santé en situation linguistique minoritaire. *Healthcare Policy*. 4(4), 36-42.

Bouchard, L. (2013). La santé des populations de langue officielles en situation minoritaires. RRASFO.

Language and health

Who are the most vulnerable francophones in Ontario over 65 years of age?

Those living in

- low income situations,
- with lower levels of education,
- socially isolated situations, and
- in rural areas.

Even more at risk are

- Women
- People who have immigrated, or recently arrived

What is your experience?

It is not just one factor
(language), but rather the
intersection of many
vulnerabilities that increases
health risks.

What do you think?



Language in health

A quiz!

Access to health and social services

- ⦿ Receiving services in French has been reported to be difficult in certain areas of Ontario - even in Ottawa. (Drolet et al., 2014)
- ⦿ Even if French services are available, issues frequently arise with continuity of care, and lack of educational materials, or tools in French. (Savard et al., 2013)

Access to health and social services

Even when services are available, the Francophone minority group *does not have a tendency to ask for them.*

Barriers include

- Conviction that the service doesn't exist
- Belief that there will be a delay for the service, and that it will be of lesser quality

Official minority language groups

Other reasons for not requesting services in French:

- ◎ Bilingualism
- ◎ Linguistic insecurity

Official minority language groups

CAUTION: Healthcare and social service professionals have a tendency to over estimate second language abilities.

In particular with reading – 3/5 of older Francophones have difficulties reading.

Official minority language groups

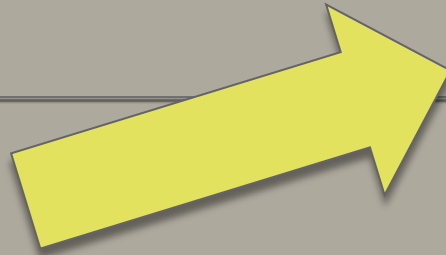
A review

What do you think?

What could we
do...?



Active Offer



“The set of measures taken by designated administrative bodies to ensure that French language services are **evident, readily available, easily accessible, and publicized**, and that the **quality** of these services is comparable to that of services offered in English”



Active Offer

Active Offer is a **PROACTIVE** approach, which means that professionals offer the clients the choice of official language services *before* being asked.

- ◆ Say **BONJOUR/HELLO** when greeting patients/clients;
- ◆ Wear a pin or tag that identifies if you can speak French;
- ◆ Have signs in your establishment that announce French services;



Active Offer

- ◆ Have all documentation, and forms available in both languages;
- ◆ Make sure internet sites, and telephone greetings are in both official languages;
- ◆ Have a list of French resources and services easily available.

Caution!

How can you identify a Francophone? You can't.

- ◎ French in the world: 6th most spoken language and present on all continents
- ◎ Francophones in Ontario are a very culturally diverse group – 14% of them identify as a visual minority (Government of Ontario, 2012)
- ◎ What is the definition of “Francophone” according to government?

Active Offer: What do you think?

What can you do as a Navigator?

What if YOU don't speak French?



Using an interpreter

- ◎ What can we do about other minority language groups?

Interpreters:

Who can be an interpreter?

What are the pros and cons of using them?

Using an interpreter

<http://www.offreactive.com/portfolio/language-and-health/>

In any language...

“Faced with challenges linked to a low rate of literacy during a health intervention, what can I do to ensure that all my patients, whether they are young, elderly, of low socio-economic status, etc. understand the language I speak?”

From Tool Box for the Active Offer (CNFS, 2017), retrieved from <http://www.offreactive.com/portfolio/language-and-health/>



Questions?

Please contact me if you would like a list of the references used:
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