

Perception of Newcomers Regarding Learning English and Culture in Canada

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Received: July 6, 2019 Accepted: September 22, 2019 Online Published: September 25, 2019

doi: 10.5539/elt.v12n10p86 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n10p86>

Abstract

There are some factors, which are motivational, and on the other hand, there are many challenges that may cause hindrance for learning English as a second language. Therefore, the main objective is to assess perception regarding factors for learning English as a second language, especially among new immigrants. This was a cross-sectional study conducted at a Polycultural center, Canada during the period of June-2017 to July-2017. The results of the study reinforced that new immigrants face challenges while learning English. Almost more than half the participants said that they find difficulty in understanding majority words. Regarding learning culture, two-thirds mentioned that the learning about culture gives them different points of view about the world and develops their critical thoughts. However, the socio-demographic characteristics like age, native language, play an important role in learning English.

Keywords: language acquisition, motivation, barriers, challenges, learning English

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the Problem

The English learning as second language acquisition (SLA) for the immigrants who landed in Canada is an essential step for settling. This learning can be affected by some factors, which motivate learners to learn any skill. Gardner (1982) presented a model which described that learner's success mainly depends upon more than one factor and that was revealed in his socio-educational model. This model uncovers that four factors which are inter-related play a vital role in motivation like, the social and cultural milieu, differences among individuals, situation or context of learning and its outcome.

The adult learning that is "Andragogy" is based on some principles such as inner motivation, practical needs, learning by doing, real problems and personal experience, etc. (Literacy, & Network, 2013). However, theorists presented typically a group motivation together with various aspects of personality as regard to "affective" factors which has an essential role in learning language beside native language (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1989; Stern, 1983). It was further endorsed by Gardner (1990), that three elements are important for learning a language, i.e. first, a willingness to learn it, second, hard work expended and third, favourable attitudes towards learning.

The above-mentioned principles and motivational factors are the key role player in any second language acquisition (SLA) including English (Al Othman et al., 2013; Waseem & Tahira, 2013; Mary, 2014; O'Malley et al., 1985; Véronique, 2014). All new immigrants come to any foreign country want to proficient in actively using other languages. However, they all come from different backgrounds with diverse motivations, attitudes and learning styles. In general, these factors might influence learning process overall, and especially for learning of English (Barkhuizen, 1998; Littlewood, 2010; Price & Gascoigne, 2006; Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

1.2 Importance of the Problem

There are several stages for an adaptation of immigrants in new countries, thus all immigrants need to pass through all these stages in Canada. The stages of settlement start from euphoria, disenchantment with frustration, gradual adjustment with recovery and acceptance (ISAN, 2019). At the beginning immigrants feel this is a very exciting time, however, after a time all immigrants start feeling very frustrated, confused and disappointed because having difficulty in communication and things are different from their own countries. Therefore, move from frustration to

recovery stage requires a thorough understanding of culture and learning of English as a second language.

The English learned as a second language is nowhere unlike to other language learners they can explicate the motivational factors here such as maintaining two types of motivations: an integrative motivation which signifies the desire to identify the target culture, while instrumental motivation suggests to fulfilling practical objectives for instance, getting employment (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1982; Gardner, 1988). These both motivational factors play a pivotal role in learning English as a second language for coping of challenges during settlement in Canada.

1.3 Relevant Scholarship

Acquiring new skills is so difficult and similarly learning English as a second language is challenging especially during settlement in English-speaking countries. Many studies have revealed that motivation is certainly linked to the achievement of learning English or any other language as an additional language. Acquisition of a second language requires two things: motivation and attitude, which ensure successful learning, thus, numerous motivational theories and models have been formulated to explore and explain this connection.

Gardner (1982) presented a model which described that a learner's success in any learning is attributed to a combination of more than one factor which was illustrated in his socio-educational model. These four factors play an important role and are inter-related to each other. These factors include social, cultural background, differences among learners' ability, context of learning, and attitude of learners towards learning. Later, he (Gardner, 1985) developed Attitude/Motivation Test Batter (AMTB) for an assessment of various variables related to individual differences and depicted promising results which again endorsed all factors mentioned in his model. Though this model was presented almost three decades, however, still applicable and could be used as a good reference while discussing, talking about motivational factors for learning English.

Another study made by Oxford and Shearin (1994) also explained another perspective after their analysis of twelve motivational models state that factors of motivation and can be classified into socio-psychology, cognitive development, and socio-cultural psychology. Further, it was fostered on six factors which have high impact on language. These factors more or less are similar to Gardner model presented in 1985, thus seems doesn't add much to literature. However, it includes their beliefs on them, setting goals and conducive environment for learning. Hence, it is clearly proven that motivation is a recognized way to achieve success in language learning. However, several countries like Gulf states, are still not ready to foster learners' motivation to acquire a second language because it is assumed that it is compressed to implement it. The main reason is the mother tongue profoundly embedded in linguistic history of communities in this part of the world (Al Othman et al., 2013).

Another concept described by Mary (2014) in an assessment system, the de-motivational factors that are regarded as the dissatisfying components and can be removed from a series of processors. The objectives of the research are to examine whether the motivational factor plays an important role in teaching-learning and constitutes an important dimension. Factor analysis ranks the motivational factors that affect the most among the students. The result shows the various motivational factors which affect the learners, teachers and the teaching method have high influence among students. The de-motivational factors in assessment system are regarded as the dissatisfying components which can be removed by proper administration, good assessment and evaluation criteria. There are many other factors which are directly affecting due to the absence of English skills i.e. self-confidence, social and personal growth, interaction ability, social influence, development credibility and ability to converse among fellow professionals. The assessment of the de-motivational factors might be a good idea for checking the impact of removal of these factors in learning English. However, it cannot measure the real and direct impact of these factors because there are many confounding factors are always present in the form of motivational factors.

There are many factors explained by Hussin, Maarof, and D'Cruz (2001), like positive self-concept, high self-esteem, positive attitude, clear understanding of the goals for learning and actively participation in the learning process. It enhances further if related conducive learning environment is available. In this study, it is revealed that conducive environment is also one of the major components of acquiring any learning skills.

Six factors usually influence motivation i.e. their attitudes, beliefs on themselves, goals setting, conducive learning environmental, and personal attributes. In order to build a motivation towards language learning, three specific elements are strongly needed: good student-teacher relationship, learner self-confidence, and satisfaction of learners. These all components are interrelated to each other for the process of motivation development. There is nothing new presentation in six factors model and almost all factors are same as mentioned by other authors like Garder (1984, 1985), Al Othman et al. (2013) and Oxford and Shearin (1994).

The review illustrates the relation of the two touching variables of hysteria and motivation in learning English in

Asian students. Within the light-weight of two scales of motivation and anxiety, knowledge of a hundred and seventy males and females' undergraduates, matured between 19-20 years, the review discovered that instrumental motivation may be an important contributor towards second language anxiety, together with apprehensiveness of negative assessment, speech apprehension, concern of tests and anxiety of English categories, while integrative motivation solely contributed towards the concern of negative analysis. The review imitates past analysis in revealing that there's a lot of instrumental motivation than integrative motivation in learners' circumstances where English is very important for advancement and economic progress. The review brings up future headings for educators, researchers, language planners and policymakers (Waseem, 2013).

Canada is a bilingual country. In the province of Quebec, French is widely spoken, whereas in the other provinces, English is spoken most. Official language minorities (OLMs) is a term used to signify English speakers residing in Quebec and the French speakers residing outside of Quebec. Presumably immigrants face challenges accessing health care services as a result of language barriers. While linguistic minorities have been shown to face difficulties accessing health care services because of language barriers and socioeconomic disadvantage elsewhere (Jacobs et al., 2006; Fiscella et al., 2002; Quan et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2005).

1.4 Hypotheses

We hypothesized that the motivational factors are important to learn any language. Hence, we designed this study to assess the perception of learners regarding the role of motivational factors in learning a second language mainly English.

- What kind of challenges faced by immigrants while learning English during their settlement in Canada?
- How new immigrants feel about learning English as a second language besides their native language?

2. Method

2.1 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

All adults, males and female foreigners and newly immigrants during the last two years Children under 18 years of age and over 60 years of elderly have been excluded which became almost 75 in number out of total 475 registered immigrants at polycultural centre. Therefore, the sample size was 400 participants.

2.2 Sampling Procedures

We collected information from all registered foreigners during the period of June-2017 to July-2017, which is 400 in total. The population of this study has been taken from Poly-cultural Centre, Mississauga, Canada, which offers English language learning too. Data collection has started in June-2017 and complete in July-2017.

2.2.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

There were 400 adults from 16 to 70 years registered at polycultural centre. After excluded of 75 (19%) that is under 18 and over 65 of age people, still we had 325 (81%) participants in our study from total registered immigrants. Therefore, the study revealed high precision and almost 90% of power.

2.2.2 Measures and Covariates

The study aimed as an outcome that what challenges faced by immigrants while learning English during their settlement in Canada and their perception about learning English as a second language. A questionnaire adopted and modified and it has questions related to socio-demographic variables and 8 questions relevant to the perception of participants regarding challenges faced by them while learning English as a second language. After modification in the questionnaire, a pre-testing was done on 20 immigrants which were not included in the main analysis and assessed the reliability coefficient i.e., 0.069. Therefore, it was considered to apply as valid and reliable questionnaire.

Although educational research is considered low-risk research (Sullivan, 2011) it has its own ethical implications. This study as mentioned above is designed to explore the perception of new immigrants, however, human subjects were involved though it was not an intervention study, it is important to follow ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011). Having read the proposal, the university gave ethical permission as part of the educational evaluation.

2.2.3 Research Design

It was a descriptive cross - sectional analytical study design because we have collected information based on questionnaire at one point in time whenever participants are available during the study period.

3. Results

3.1 Statistics and Data Analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS software version 21 with the help of the statistician. Descriptive statistical tests and Chi-square used for assessing a significant difference between categorical variables. A p-value equal of less was considered as significant level for assessing an association into two variables.

3.2 Baseline Data

We have approached almost 325 immigrants; however, 310 have given consent for participation so the response rate is about 95%. Demographic characteristics show that two-thirds (66.8%) were females. In the group most immigrants came from Asian countries (43%), followed by Middle East (35%) and other countries. Almost one-third of the participant has a master's degree (38%) followed by a Ph.D. (20%). As regards to the native language, 35% were speaking Arabic, 20% were Urdu speakers, 12% were Hindi speaking and only 6% were English speakers. Regarding the duration in Canada, 37% lived here for more than a year, 30% living in Canada around 6 to 9 months while 25% lived in Canada 3 to 6 months (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants (n=310)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	103
	Female	207
Nationality	Asian	134
	Middle East	109
Education Status	African	48
	European	12
	Australian	07
	Higher Secondary	60
	Graduation	69
Native Language	Master	117
	PhD	64
	Arabic	109
	Urdu	62
	Hindi	38
Total Time in Canada	Chinese	29
	English	18
	Others	54
	<3 months	20
	3-6 months	79
	6-9 months	95
	> 1 year	116

3.3 Inferential Data

Table 2 shows the challenges faced by immigrants. Out of the total, 87% were only aiming to learn English. All participants want to Canadian culture. In response to how they want to learn the culture (49%) responded that they prefer to learn as they learn about their culture. However, 26% want to read only pages about the culture, and 24% want to learn culture a little. For learning English (43%) wants to learn through reading passages and 29% prefer to learn as they have learned in their own countries. Out of total participants (58%) mentioned that sometimes words bother them, however, 27% responded that difficult always bothers them. While learning, 73% mentioned that we feel that we live in a different world and it develops my critical thoughts. Related to question for losing national identity, 87% do not give importance to culture. While learning, 42% were feeling challenged about the Canadian course books and 45% facing the problem for adaptation in Canadian culture.

Table 2. Perception and Challenges faces by immigrant for learning English (n=310)

Challenges	Responses	Frequency	Percent
While learning English, do you want to learn English only?	Yes	270	87.1
	No	40	12.9
Do you want to learn Canadian Culture?	Yes	310	100.0
	Only in reading passage	81	26.1
How do you want to learn it? (Culture)	Just like my own culture	152	49.0
	A little bit	77	24.8
	Only in reading passage	134	43.2
How do you want to learn it? (English)	Just like my own culture	90	29.0
	A little bit	86	27.7
	Yes	84	27.1
Do the words, which you do not understand about target language's culture, bother you?	No	46	14.8
	Sometimes	180	58.1
	It gives us a different point of view about the world we live in and life	44	14.2
	It develops my critical thoughts.	40	12.9
What kind of contributions will you get by learning different cultural values?	Both	226	72.9
	Don't give importance to culture	270	87.1
	All	40	12.9
While learning different culture, do you think you will lose your national identity?	Canadian course books...	130	41.9
	Adaptation	139	44.8
	All	41	13.2

The comparison of different socio-demographic variables with the questions relevant to challenges a few variables reveals significant association ($p < 0.05$) with different questions as described in Table 3.

Table 3. Association with socio-demographic variables to participants perception and challenges for learning English

Significant Associated Variables	Chi-square Value	P-value
Age * Willingness to learn English	21.058	0.002
Nationality * Willingness to learn English	27.408	0.001
Nationality * What kind of contributions will you get by learning different cultural values?	25.378	0.001
Nationality * What kind of cultural problems do you usually face while learning a foreign language?	37.366	0
Education * Want to learn English only	32.379	0
Education * What kind of contributions will you get by learning different cultural values?	26.532	0.001
Native Language * Want to learn English only	28.308	0.002
Native Language * Do you want to learn Canadian culture too	17.537	0.004
Native Language * What kind of contributions will you get by learning different cultural values?	25.194	0.005
Native Language * What kind of cultural problems do you usually face while learning a foreign language?	25.194	0

4. Discussion

In this global village, many people inhabit and they use different languages, but English is a language that enables them in crossing and breaking all barriers and hindrances of geography and linguistics. It helps them in communicating with one another, and so they have become one citizen of the same world, regardless of racial and national prejudices (T. J. Khan & N. Khan, 2016). Overall study shows that immigrants had an optimistic approach to learning English as a second language. However, they face some challenges for learning English as well as Canadian culture. The response rate was excellent. Majority of participants were females in the study. Usually, females take seriously any task given to them and respond appropriately (Smith, 2008). There are multiple factors which affect learning, and gender is considered one of them (Oxford, 1990).

The age and nationality were found to be significant for willingness to learn English. However, different nationalities have significant differences while facing for cultural problems that different people face while learning a foreign language. Moreover, level of education and native language also has significant results on willingness to learn English. On the contrary, as native language sometimes make hindrance for learning foreign languages.

In the group, most immigrants came from Asian countries, followed by Middle East and other countries. In fact, because of the immigration these countries accounted for a quarter of total immigrants in 2016. In our study, most of the participants' time span in Canada around 6 to 9 months. It has observed a long time ago that any human group has, at least within a short time span, invented its own way of life (Dollard, 1939). Therefore, spending more time makes easiness in the life because of the understanding of system. Settling in new countries takes the time (Khoo, 1994) and regarding the dating in Canada, the majority of participants are living around six to nine months.

Almost half of the participants in the study were lower than master while remaining have mastered and PhD degrees in different disciplines, the literature enforced the role of educational level in learning (Oxford, 1990). The settlement of new immigrants requires a holistic perspective and long-term social support (Simich, 2005) and the main role is being played by language learning. Therefore, it is also reflected in our study that majority of participants aimed to learn English for better settlement in Canada. Almost all participants wanted to learn about Canadian culture in our study, which also reflected the need of understanding the culture for better settlement (Berry, 1997) besides learning the language (Hinkel, 1999). The culture and language have profound influences on the cognitive process, therefore, it seems cultural beliefs and expectations (Oxford, 1990) affect in learning English and eventually helpful in settlement easily in Canada (Lambert, 1973).

Regarding different strategies for learning English as a second language, literature described mainly three

strategies: Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies (Oxford, 1989). Learning English is an intricate experience and grounded on multifactor: cultural beliefs and expectations, educational policies, local influences, task requirements, personal preferences, learning opportunities, individual age differences, gender, educational level and social class (Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Chamot & Kupper, 1989). In our study, participants stated that they want to learn English, nearly half of the participants want to learn through reading passages, however, one-third prefer to learn as they have learned any language in their own countries. The participants highlighted that they usually bother with some words of the language; especially difficult words bother them too much. It is one of the obstacles which usually making a problem for learners. As it has been observed by Celce-Murcia (2001) that listening gets complexity and difficulties in a place where it is being used as a language.

Adaptation of culture other than your own culture represents a common process of environmental adaptation. It is considered a frustration reaction syndrome, which is simply a culture shock (Anderson, 1994). Besides learning English, learning about culture also plays an important role settlement in new culture as well as learning new language. In our study, almost half of the participants believed that they preferred to learn as they learn about their own culture. However, some of them want to read only the passages about culture and remaining to want to learn culture a little (Schein, 1996). While learning about culture, participants mentioned that it gives us a different point of view about the world. However, less than half were feeling challenged about the Canadian course books and facing the problem for adaptation in Canadian culture (Berry, 1997).

Conclusively, the study depicted that participants having difficulty in adapting culture and learn English as a second language. While discussing the implications of the study, the policy-makers need to consider the challenges mentioned by new immigrants in the study when making a plan for helping settlers in Canada. The significance of the study is to emphasize the outcomes at different polycultural centres responsible for teaching English and helping newly immigrants in their settlement. This paper might give an idea to teachers and people involve in settling new immigrants to modify the plan for teaching and orientation the English language.

However, it is a cross-sectional study and based on only one polycultural centre. This study assessed perception so the objectivity might be compromised because of its only based the participants' opinion. Need to conduct the study on a larger scale for more generalization.

Acknowledgments

I am very thankful to Mrs/Ms. Dima Al Kilani for assessing me in getting permission for data collection. In addition, I am very grateful to Dr. Sayed Ibrahim Ali for helping in data analysis.

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Appendix:

Appendix A: Questionnaire

General Information

1. Age: _____ (in years)
2. Gender: Male = 1, Female = 2
3. Nationality: Asian=1, European= 2, American= 3, Australian= 4, UK=5, Middle East=6
4. Education: Illiterate = 0, primary = 1, secondary = 3, higher secondary = 4, graduates = 5, Master = 6, and PhD= 7
5. Native language: Englis=1, Urdu=2, French =3, Hindi =4, Arabic=5
6. Total time in Canada: <= 3 months = 1, 3 - 6= 2, 6-9 month=3 > = 1 year = 4

Specific Information

1. **While learning English, do you want to learn English only?**
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Sometimes
2. **While learning English, do you want to learn Canadian culture too?**
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Sometimes
3. **If you want to learn Canadian culture, how do you want to learn it?**
 - A. Only in the reading passages about the target culture.
 - B. Just like my own cultural values.
 - C. A little bit to understand the target language.
4. **If you want to learn English, how do you want to learn it?**
 - A. Only in the reading passages about the target culture.
 - B. Just like my own cultural values.

- C. A little bit to understand the target language.
5. **Do the words, which you don't understand about target language's culture, bother you?**
- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Sometimes
6. **What kind of contributions will you get by learning different cultural values?**
- A. It gives us different point of view about the world we live in and life
- B. It develops my critical thoughts.
- C. Both
7. **While learning different culture, do you think you will lose your national identity?**
- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Sometimes
8. **What kind of cultural problems do you usually face while learning a foreign language?**
- A. Canadian course books wanted to teach only their culture
- B. They don't give importance to other culture
- C. They only try to teach English spoken countries cultural elements
- D. All

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