

Cultural Approximation, Alienation and the Role of English as a Second Language in Canadian Society

Haja Mohideen Mohamed Ali

Department of English Language and Literature
International Islamic University Malaysia

Tasdiq Nomaira Alam

Department of English Language and Literature
International Islamic University Malaysia

Abstract

This study examined acculturation and adaptation of the immigrants in their new intercultural setting in Toronto, Canada, as well as the role of English language in their lives. The research made use of triangulation of methods as three types of instruments were used to collect the data: structured questionnaire, open-ended questionnaire and interview. Data were collected based on the immigrants' perceptions on numerous variables for instance, acculturation attitudes, cultural identity, perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation, importance of English language, language proficiency and language difficulties, scope and facilities in Canada, immigrants' point of view towards the society, their attempts to integrate with natives and so on. Sixty four immigrants from different countries participated in the study. It was discovered from the research findings that Canadian immigrants initially feel alienated and face numerous difficulties to adjust their lives in a new and unfamiliar surrounding, but as soon as they acculturate with the existing environment, they feel contented and find themselves a part of the society though many impositions due to social norms, lack of English language proficiency, discrimination and stigma being an immigrant often result in hindrance. The study also exposed the importance of English language in the immigrants' lives. Results show that the immigrants who are well educated and fluent in English are more involved and accepted in the Canadian society.

Key words: Acculturation, migration, social cohesion, target language acquisition

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1. Introduction

Many countries in the industrially developed world have much attraction for those from countries suffering from political instability, persecution, famine, poverty and seemingly endless wars. So, they migrate in search of a better life where they may feel secure from the grave problems plaguing their nations. They risk their life to cross the perilous seas to reach the shores of Europe and Australia, for example. Migration, according to Bhugra (2004) “is a process of social change where an individual, alone or accompanied by others, because of one or more reasons leaves one geographical area for prolonged stay or permanent settlement in another geographical area” (Bhugra, 2004, p. 129). The successful migrants do not have a bed of roses laid out for them. Some may fairly quickly acculturate if they are able to speak the language of the host country, have similar religious identity, share common social values, etc. Migrants may experience “a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation, which will lead to processes of acculturation” (Bhugra, 2004, p. 129). Migrants go through many varied phases to accommodate themselves.

2) Literature review

There has been migration from African and Asian countries, including the Middle East to non-English speaking European countries, for example, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland. A host of languages are spoken in these countries. A large number of immigrants have settled in English speaking Australia, Canada and the United States. These countries have become truly multicultural in character. Thanks to the magnanimous immigration policies of these states. In some countries, immigration has become a thorny issue as the newly arrived immigrants or refugees come from different cultural, religious, ethnic and language backgrounds, The nature of the society most immigrants and asylum seekers comes from and the nature of the societies they want to settle in may cause difficulties in social adjustment. It has been hypothesized by Bhugra (2005, p. 22) that individuals who migrate from predominantly socio-centric, or collectivistic societies into a society that is predominantly egocentric, or individualistic, are likely to have problems adjusting to the new culture, especially if the individuals themselves are socio-centric in their own belief system.

It is obvious that the preferred countries in the West are primarily individualistic societies whose cultural values and ideologies may be challenging to them. Bhugra adds that allocentric individuals who hail from a collectivistic society are very likely to face various types of stress if they are to migrate to individualistic societies and have to deal with idiocentric individuals. Immigrant families to Canada and the United States, for example, will have to confront many problems which will probably make things difficult for them to adapt to the host culture.

This study is particularly interested in how migrants to Canada cope with migration, their cultural identity and English, the language of the host country, besides French. Canada has two language zones- Anglophone and Francophone. Immigrant families arrive in Canada to seek a better life for their future, very often fleeing poverty, strife, persecution and discrimination of all sorts. Those who do not experience such difficulties go in search of greener pastures. These are usually the professionals who are attracted by occupational and educational factors.

Immigrants are coming to Canada in huge numbers, partly due to its perceived policy of multiculturalism. The immigration policy is viewed as economically beneficial. The major sticking point according to Hansen (2003) is the sense of belonging to Canada among the more recent immigrants compared to those who arrived in the late 60s, 70s and early 80s. In addition

there are decreasing levels of earning and academic attainment. In an interview given by Randall Hansen, an authority on immigration issues, conducted by Loretta Ho and Harbi Natt, most immigrant children go on to attend public schools and this is helpful for integration and even assimilation into Canadian society. He believes that immigrants to Canada pursue jobs and university students acculturate very well (http://munkschool.utoronto.ca/ethnic_studies/2013/02/qa-with-randall-hansen).

In the same interview Hansen (2003) opines that multiculturalism in Canada is about retaining the identity of the new Canadians in contrast to USA which has become a melting pot or a potpourri of cultures. This may be inadvertently to give the false impression that while USA practices assimilation, Canada is multicultural.

With regard to the issue of welfare programs vis-a-vis in Canada, Hansen (2003) is of the view that immigrants to Canada succeed due to the international quality of public schools there which most of the immigrant children attend. He believes that highly skilled immigrant professionals and entrepreneurs are not in need of income support. Health care has no non-positive effects.

Hansen asserts that the country's immigration policy has brought about much benefit. The policy has attracted a skilled workforce with their families. Since most Canadians are not indigenous to Canada, there is a sense of reality that they are in general immigrants, the practical distinction being early and late immigrants. The citizens are happy and neighborhoods are not race-based.

Language plays a crucial role in migration and acculturation. Immigrants who come from language backgrounds which are different from the dominant languages in the host country are likely to face a host of problems initially. This may even lead to loss of their heritage language over time. On the other hand, those who arrive from similar language backgrounds (varieties of the dominant language, included) may be able to adapt and settle in fairly quickly. This is the case with migrants from Anglophone Africa and former British colonies in Asia, for example, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, when they migrate to the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the United States.

According to Bhugra & Becker (2005), new immigrants felt a sense of cultural bereavement due to linguistic barriers, financial issues and religious beliefs. Language is a part of cultural identity, in addition to religion, dietary habits and leisure activities. Bhugra (2004) asserts that linguistic competence and economic stability are important factors in adapting to a new culture in the country they have come to resettle. To feel part of the new environment and different culture, there has to be some attempts to accommodate the leisure activities such as literature, music, movies and sports which may be dissimilar from the country of origin. Immigrants from a minority culture, will inevitably have to interact with the majority culture. The minority culture may find the majority culture less intimidating and more inviting as the members of the minority group become linguistically fluent in the target language and socially competent in the majority culture's norms. With such skills, individuals would be better able to fit in and find suitable employment, Linguistic congruity and common cultural similarities may go a long way in providing social and emotional support.

Learning a second/foreign language by newly arrived immigrants involves issues of identity and exposure to the target language culture. The cultural, religious and ethnic identity of the new and older immigrants may be retained by membership of communities of practice whose three characteristics are mutual engagement which bind the learners as a social entity; joint enterprise in which teachers and learners attempt to understand what binds them as a community and shared repertoire of commonly used resources and practices, according to Wenger (as cited in Brown, 2014). Kramsch states that foreign language learning does have effect on the identities of second language learners in an L2 culture (as cited in Brown, 2014). The development of hybrid identities, where possible, may even be negotiated by the learners themselves. A language whether it is ones primary language or a second or third is related to the construction of our identity and acculturation.

Immigrant communities have to confront different cultures and ideologies. Monocultural communities are few and multicultural ones are many. So, they have to traverse different cultures, but very often there is a dominant culture which has come to be largely recognized. For example, in the United Kingdom, although there are many different communities, it is the white English speaking culture which is the dominant one. To be considered British, the residents are expected to share or tolerate the values of the majority population. But countries which have embraced multiculturalism do face problems with non-majority communities. Language proficiency in the national language or the official language/s is one positive way to minimize possible doubts and misgivings. The second language has to be acquired for both intrinsic and integrative purposes. Success in second language acquisition is tied up with social integration which in turn may be expected to contribute to harmonious living in the country where people have gone to live, probably until their last years, or until such time they want to return to their countries of origin when conditions are favourable. The dominant language or languages of the host country have to be successfully acquired for the mutual benefit of both new and old residents.

Canada is a country which is avowedly multicultural. English and French are the two dominant languages. Many from erstwhile British colonies seek out the Anglophone provinces, while those from former French territories seek to settle in Francophone Canada. Culture acquisition of the dominant societies is inevitable and one cannot be completely detached from it. Brown (2014) states that there are four successive stages: 1) an initial period when the settlers experience excitement and euphoria in the new environment, 2) the phenomenon of culture shock when the things the new settler finds much different from his/her way of life and such estrangement and alienation may lead to anomie, 3) gradual adjustment to the new way of life of the host country, and 4) the last stage of accommodation of a new culture and identity as a citizen of the host country. Anomie, according to Lambert, may even motivate a person to acquire the target language and the new culture synonymously (as cited in Brown, 2014).

Although culture is a sensitive issue as it deals with one's identity, the foreign culture cannot be divorced from their daily life. Attitudes towards others, especially those of the fellow citizens, and more so of the people whose language the immigrants need to survive and prosper in the new surroundings. Attitudes towards the second/foreign language, the speakers, their positive traits, their literature, culture, etc. are essential for harmonious continued living in the new country. Negative attitudes, being defensive or reluctant to learn a new language and refusal

to deal with people of different cultural beliefs or ideologies are not helpful in learning the dominant language/s of the host country. Immigrant communities cannot afford to live in linguistic and cultural ghettos.

New arrivals to an English-speaking country have to come into contact with the varieties of the dominant language. In UK and USA, there is considerable variation in the different regions. This variation involves phonetic differences, besides grammatical, lexical and morphological ones. In Australia, a country with a lot of immigration history, there are such differences too. The new immigrants need to take the initiative to know the varieties which are not only standard varieties, but also actually those used by people from various backgrounds and regions. An investigation of Australian newspaper English has revealed expressions which are peculiar to the Aussies (Mohideen, 2013). Geetha (2015), a resident of Melbourne, has identified a number of typical Australian expressions: mate- a male friend; used by both men and women; sheila- a woman; a generic term to address a woman; I'm crook- an individual feeling unwell and may throw up; I was involved in a prang- involved in an accident involving vehicles; bring a plate- bring a cooked dish for the occasion; barbie- barbecue; snags- sausages; chock-chicken; mozzies- mosquitoes; a cuppa with bickie- a cup of tea with biscuits; brekkie- breakfast; it's your shout- it's your treat at the pub; tradie- a handyman; sparkie- electrician; dinkum- a fair deal; No worries- a response to statements of problems, thankful expressions, etc.

Next, let us look at some Canadian lingo which residents and new Canadians have to be familiar with to facilitate their social interaction: eh- don't you think, as in The weather today is glorious, eh? Canuck- a nickname for Canadian; hoser- an unsophisticated person, the Australian equivalent is 'bogan.' Keener- boot licker; lineup- queue; for sure- definitely; elastic- rubber band; serviette- paper napkin; sweat pants- track pants; to be on poge- to be on welfare; to proctor an exam- to invigilate an exam Other Canadianisms, according to Okrent (2015), a linguist, include "toonie"- for a two dollar coin; "loonie"- for a one dollar coin; "a bunny hug"- for a hooded sweatshirt; "hydro"- for hydro-electric power, related to this is the hydro bill;

Besides the above, Melchers & Shaw (2003) describe Canadian English and highlight some essential features. In terms of spelling, British spelling is more commonly used compared to American spelling with reference to -our vs -or and -re vs -er. When it involves the -ise and -ize, the American forms are preferred. When it comes to phonology, there are vacillations between British and American ways of pronunciation. The younger group of Canadians seem to have an inclination towards American variants according to the Survey of Canadian English undertaken in 1972.

It is not an easy experience for immigrants and newer arrivals to integrate easily or quickly in their adopted countries. The language challenge is by no means something one may overcome in a short span of time satisfactorily. The people concerned have to cross the linguistic barriers for successful social cohesion and professional contribution in the society. Unsatisfactory proficiency in the target language may deprive the residents of a meaningful coexistence and citizenship to reap the maximum benefits of settlement in industrially and technologically advanced countries. This may help to reduce the sense of alienation and open the way to approximation of shared cultural attributes.

3) Methodology

3.1) Objective

The objective of this study is to investigate the Canadian immigrants' lives in their new intercultural setting and find out the role of English as a second language in their lives.

3.2) Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do the Canadian immigrants live in their new intercultural setting?
2. What is the role of English as second language in the Canadian immigrants' lives?

3.3) Research Design

This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. A Likert-scale survey was distributed among the participants. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also conducted and open-ended questionnaires were distributed among the participants as requirements for the research design.

3.4) Participants

In total, 64 immigrants participated in this study. 50 respondents participated in the survey, 10 of them participated in the open-ended questionnaire and 4 participants were interviewed by one of the researchers. The immigrants are from different countries; they were from Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine and Myanmar.

3.5) Instruments and Procedure

Data were collected in Toronto by one of the researchers who conducted the field work.. This study made use of the triangulation method as three types of instruments were used to collect the data. Data collection involved completion of structured Likert-scale questionnaire, open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary, confidential and that the responses were anonymous. In most of the cases questionnaires were group-administered outside of the English language centers, people's houses, inside the mosques and in the shopping malls. In other cases, immigrants were approached individually, and the questionnaire was filled out individually.

The first instrument used was the structured Likert-scale survey questionnaires which consisted of 16 questions. The participants were asked about their perceptions on acculturation attitudes, cultural identity, perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation, importance of English language, language proficiency and language difficulties, and scope and facilities for personal growth (Phinney, & Vedder, 2006). The second instrument was the open-ended questionnaire where the respondents elaborately answered about their purpose of immigration to Canada, life styles, point of view towards the society as immigrants, their attempts to integrate with natives, marginalization in society, their contribution to Canada, etc. The third instrument was the semi-structured interview. In the interview, the participants discussed in detail their struggle to adjust their lives in Canada, the usage of English during a normal day, complexities using English as second language and so forth. Data were collected in Toronto. The response options of the Likert-scale questionnaire ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Several issues were discussed in the questionnaire that includes cultural identity,

acculturation attitudes, perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation, importance of English language, language proficiency and language difficulties, scope and facilities etc.

3.6) Sociocultural Adaptation: Sociocultural adaptation was assessed using scales for social adjustment and problems. A sample item of the scale for social adjustment is: “I adjusted myself very fast with the new environment.” A sample item of the scale for social problems is: “I felt cultural shock when I came to Canada for the first time.”

3.7) Acculturation Attitudes: This matter assessed four acculturation attitudes such as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. For example, “I prefer to mingle with my community people as well as the domestic Canadians.” (integration); “I have many native Canadian close friends who help me understand the lesson/activity/work.” (assimilation); “I prefer to mingle with my own community people only” (separation); and “I am not involved with the social activities (neither with the native Canadians nor with my community people)” (marginalization). The terms “domestic Canadians” and “native Canadians” are used by and large to refer to those people who have made Canada their home.

3.8) Importance of English Language, Language Proficiency and Language Difficulties: This scale inquired a person’s abilities to understand and the use of English language. Some examples: “To get a good job/good grades depends on my language proficiency level.” (importance of English language) “Hard work does not bring desired out come when I am not fluent in English.” (language proficiency) “I have difficulties understanding the lecture in the class/supervisor’s instruction in the workplace in terms of vocabulary and speed.” “I feel shy to participate in the class/society because of my lack of fluency in English.” (language difficulties) .

3.9) Cultural Identity: Cultural identity was measured with items assessing cultural affirmation (e.g. sense of belonging, positive or negative feelings about being or not being a group member). A sample item is “I get less social support compared to the domestic Canadians.”

3.10) Perceived Discrimination: This scale assessed perceived frequency of being treated unfairly or negatively because of one’s ethnicity (e.g. “The lecturers/supervisors/employers favor the native Canadians.”).

3.11) Scope and Facilities: Scope and facilities in Canada for the immigrants were assessed by a question such as “The support services (language courses/tutoring/supplemental courses) help to improve English proficiency.”

The Likert-scale questionnaire also sought information about the immigrants’ country of origin, length of residence and purpose of immigration. The collected data were divided into two categories based on the immigrants’ length of residence and purpose of their living in Canada. The responses of the participants for each question are presented in percentage $[(\sum \text{ number of responses})/(\sum \text{ total number of participants}) \times 100]\%$.

The open-ended questions were eleven in all. For these questions the respondents stated their purpose of immigration to Canada, their comfort and discomfort as immigrants, point of view towards the society as immigrants, sociocultural adaptation, marginalization in society,

their contribution to Canada and so on. Two sample questions for the comfort and discomfort of the immigrants: “What is the aspect that you are comfortable with as an immigrant of Canada (Please explain with reference to the culture of majority Canadians)?” and “What are those aspects which you cannot accept or you are less comfortable with (if any)?” To investigate about their attempts to integrate with natives, a few questions related to their sociocultural adaptation were asked: “Are you making any attempts to integrate with other Canadians? How? What are the problems doing that (if any)?”, “What are the specific areas of Canadian life you adapt/acculturate to?” Their point of view towards the society as immigrants was reflected in the following questions: “Do you encourage your spouse to socialize with Canadians/ improve language proficiency?” and “Do the older immigrant women lead secluded lives in Canada (answer according to your perception)?” The immigrants were also asked some questions regarding marginalization in society and their contribution to Canada. The open-ended questionnaire also sought information about a variety of demographic variables. These included immigrants’ age, gender, country of origin, religious affiliation, educational back ground, length of residence, ethnic background, social status etc. Details will be explained in the Findings and Discussion which follow.

The semi-structured interviews were more likely a discussion among the participants and the researcher rather than a formal stereotyped interview, though the researcher had a set of questions to ask the interviewees. The participants were very keen about the disclosure of their identity even though the researcher assured them about the confidentiality about the information provided by them. The participants discussed in detail concerning the struggle of adjustment in Canada, their English language use, proficiency and difficulties during a normal day, their point of view towards Canadian society and so forth.

4. Findings and Discussion

To answer the research questions of the study, a Likert-scale survey and an open-ended questionnaire were distributed among the participants. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to triangulate the findings.

4.1 Survey

The questionnaire on the immigrants’ perceptions consisted of 16 questions. The first three questions are about the participants’ demographic profile and rest of them represent the immigrants’ perceptions regarding acculturation attitudes, cultural identity, perceived discrimination, sociocultural accommodation, the importance of English, language proficiency and language problems, and scope and facilities available, etc. The participants were asked to choose their opinions on the scale of 1-5, where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 5 is “strongly agree.”

Table 1. *The percentage distribution of the Canadian immigrants according to their length of residence*

Length of residence	Total number of participants	Total responses	Percentage
Less than 2 years	50	10	38%
2 to 5 years		24	19%
More than 5 years		16	43%

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of the Canadian immigrants according to their length of residence. 38% of the respondents have been living in Canada for less than two years. 19% of them for two to five years and 43% (the majority of the respondents) have been living for more than 5 years.

Table 2. *The percentage distribution of the Canadian immigrants according to the purpose of their living in Canada*

Purpose of living	Total number of participants	Total responses	Percentage
Political asylum	50	10	10%
To have a better life		24	48%
Study/work		16	32%

Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of the Canadian immigrants according to the purpose of their moving to and living in Canada. 10% of the participants migrated to Canada because of the political instability of their native countries. 48% of the immigrants are seeking a better life compared to the places where they had previously lived, and 32% of the participants came to Canada for study or work purpose and then thought of pursuing immigration.

According to the survey (Figure 1), the respondents have mixed assessments about their life in Canada. The majority of the participants (77%) said that they felt cultural shock when they came to Canada for the first time. Among these 77% participants, 40% agreed with the fact of

the occurrence of cultural shock and 37% strongly agree. It is quite natural to experience culture shock when a person arrives in any place for the first time because of the dissimilarities of the culture of their countries and new culture. According to Brown's Acculturation model, (Brown 2014) a person goes through four stages when he or she arrives in an unknown environment for the first time. And cultural shock is the second stage of acculturation model after the euphoria stage which is also called the period of excitement. 17% of the participants disagreed with the idea of cultural shock and 6% remained neutral. With regard to adaptation in their host country, most of the participants (58%) stated that they could not adjust themselves with the new environment which is also similar to the second stage of cultural shock where a person suffers loneliness, estrangement, sadness, hostility, homesickness and physical illness. This is a part of sociocultural adaptation (Phinney, & Vedder, 2006) and this is also supported by our survey findings. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents said that there was no adjustment problem in the beginning of their migration to Canada and 20% remained neutral. Further analysis shows that those people, who did not feel cultural shock or remained neutral, have been living in Canada for more than five years and there is a possibility of tolerating the cultural differences which had initially shocked them.

Research findings revealed the acculturation attitudes of the immigrants relating to integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization (Phinney and Vedder, 2006). 33% of the immigrants agree that they prefer to mingle with people from their own community, as well as the domestic Canadians (integration) whereas 50% of the participants disagree (15% strongly disagree and 35% disagree) with the statement and only 7% remain neutral. The majority of the respondents (63%) disagree that they have many native Canadians as close friends who help them to understand the lesson/activity/work (assimilation) whereas 30.5% agree that they can assimilate with the native Canadians. The people who can assimilate are mostly those who have been living in Canada for a long time. In fact, some of the immigrants have been living in Canada for more than 10 years. 55% of the respondents said that they prefer to mingle only with their own community people (separation), in contrast 35% disagree with the statement and 10% remain neutral and 37.2% of the participants agreed that they are not involved with the social activities (neither with the native Canadians nor with their own community people). This is an example of marginalization, but 52% disagree with marginalization and 10.8% stay neutral about this statement. Data analysis shows that most of the immigrants who migrated to Canada seeking political asylum are not interested in integrating and/or assimilating with the Canadian people, sometimes not even with their own community people. This group of people are more separated and marginalized from the society. The importance of the English language, language proficiency and language difficulties are also reflected in the participants' responses. The majority of the participants (54%) agree that getting a good job/good grades depends on their language proficiency level. It reveals the importance of the English language in an English speaking country like Canada. 69% of the respondents stated that hard work does not bring the desired out come when the immigrants are not fluent in English.

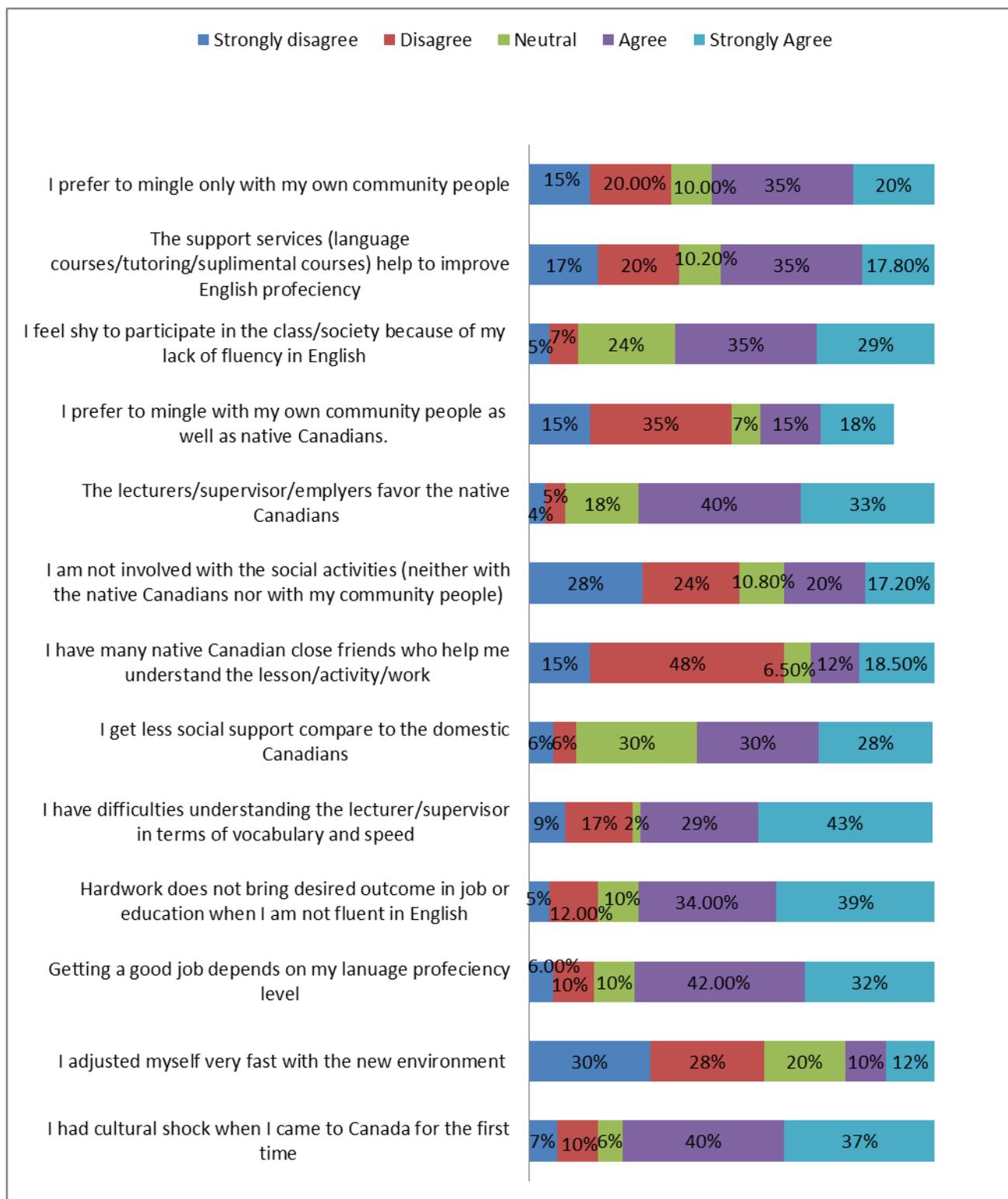


Figure 1. Survey findings of Canadian immigrants' perceptions

That means high English proficiency level is very important to succeed in Canada. In total, 72% of the immigrants agree that they have difficulties understanding the lecture in the class/supervisor's instruction in the workplace in terms of vocabulary comprehension and speed. Whereas 26% of the participants disagree with the statement and stated that they don't have any difficulties understanding the instructions in English. Further analysis proved that these 26% of the participants have been living in Canada for more than five years and most of the participants of this group are living in Canada for a better life compared to life in their native countries. 64% of the participants felt shy to participate in the class/society because of their lack of fluency in English. Most of the participants in this group have lived in Canada for less than 2 years. Only 12% disagreed with this statement as they have been living in Canada for more than 5 years. 24% participants remained neutral. It can therefore be assumed that these immigrants felt shy and did not want to disclose any of their shortcomings, if any.

The immigrants' cultural identity was also measured in the survey. 58% of the participants stated that they got less social support compared to the domestic Canadians. And a large number of people (30%) remained neutral about this statement. Only 12% of the immigrants disagreed with this statement. This means the majority of the participants felt that they were not a part of the group and they had negative feelings about not being a group member. It can be assumed that the people who remained neutral about this statement, did not want to reveal their stand in this regard as they may have also feel that they were outside of the group.

4.2 Open-ended Questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of demographic profile where the participants were asked about their age, gender, country of origin, religious affiliation, educational back ground, length of residence, ethnic background and social status. In the second part, the respondent immigrants answered eleven open-ended questions regarding their comfort and discomfort as immigrants, point of view towards the Canadian society, sociocultural adaptation, perceived marginalization in the society, their contribution to Canada etc.

The demographic profile reveals that all ten participants are Asian. Among them, four immigrants are from Bangladesh, three are from the Arab peninsula (Syria and Palestine), two immigrants from Pakistan and another immigrant is from Myanmar. Five participants are married and five of them are single. Four participants had completed their Bachelor's degree, two participants had studied until high school, one participant had completed her PhD, one participant is doing his Masters and one other participant is still doing his undergraduate degree. Four participants have been living in Canada for more than five years, and six of them for less than 2 years. The immigrants stated their thoughts and point of views briefly in the open-ended questionnaire. Interestingly, there were differences between the thoughts of highly educated immigrants and less educated immigrants though there were some exceptions. The participants who are highly educated were in favor of living in Canada, whereas the less educated participants stated their frustrations about living in Canada. In addition, those who have been living in the country for long time were quite happy with the current environment, but those who have lived for less than two years seem to be unhappy and that supports our first finding. Most of

the respondents answered that their purpose of living in Canada is to have a better standard of living such as quality of life, job opportunities, free healthcare, freedom of speech and so on. When the subjects were asked about their comfort as immigrants, one of the participants wrote thus:

I am comfortable knowing the various government services available at the disposal of all immigrants of Canada. Canada takes pride in its pluralistic values, ethics and multiculturalism – thus attesting to the helping hands that are all around.

This respondent is highly educated and quite happy about his life in Canada. On the other hand, some immigrants stated that they were immensely uncomfortable with the racism, social conflicts and resulting injustice. Interestingly, when they were asked whether they wanted their kids to grow up in Canada or not, nine participants answered positively. Only one participant was worried about the lifestyle of teenagers in western countries. Eight of them affirmed that eventually they wanted to go back to their country of origin as they could never forsake their roots of origin. Only two of them did not want to return to their native countries because of the facilities available in Canada. The respondents were also asked about their attempts to integrate with other Canadians. Most of them stated that at every possible opportunity they did try to integrate with the natives, but because of many barriers due to social norms, the stigma of being an immigrant etc. often resulted in hindrance. Out of the five married participants four said that they encourage their spouses to socialize with natives to improve their English language skills, but most of the wives were not willing to mingle with the Canadians because of shyness and language barrier. This means the English language plays a vital role in socialization and it impacts on their life in Canada. Since many of the immigrants are not fluent in English, they do not socialize with native Canadians or people of different cultures. They prefer to mingle with the people of their own country who speak the same language and eventually end up as separated or marginalized. The rest of the participants who are single stated that they would like to encourage their future spouses to interact with natives to improve their English language proficiency. The immigrants were asked about the older women's lives in Canada, whether they lived a secluded life or not. The participants answered according to their perceptions as well as their experiences. A Pakistani immigrant answered as follows,

Most of the older women prefer to live in the comfort of home, amongst family and known people. My mother is an example. She never talks to the native Canadians; sometimes she waves at the Arab people at best.

The participants wrote that the reasons could be due to language barrier, inability to deal with new people, culture and language because of old age and so on. Regarding the acculturation factor, most of the immigrants mentioned that they have acculturated or still trying to acculturate with the harsh cold weather, food habit, language, culture and identity. The respondents also discussed their contribution in Canadian society. Their answers were similar. They believe that by being active citizens; they are fulfilling their civic duties as a part of the community. All the participants stated that they feel discriminated or marginalized as immigrants. One response is quoted here:

“Yes, I feel marginalized..at times, but for the most part – I feel well accepted. At least within my community”

This statement expresses the mood of separation and marginalization of the Canadian immigrants and also indicates why the immigrants want to mingle with their people from their own respective communities. Since they can speak in their native language and follow the same culture and religion as their country of origin, they feel comfortable being what they are and doing what they do. Most of the immigrants do not want to come out of this kind of comfort zone.

4.3 Interview

Four immigrants were interviewed: two of them was from Bangladesh, one from Pakistan and another person was from Myanmar. The semi-structured interview consisted of eight questions, but many issues were exposed in the conversation with the immigrants. The participants expressed that the difficult things about adjusting their life in Canada were its culture, language and weather that confirm our second finding from the open-ended questionnaire. Among the four interviewees, three of them were nearly happy with their life in Canada, but the participant from Myanmar seemed to be very frustrated in the country. She had migrated to Canada because of the religious and political instability in Myanmar. Subsequently, the immigrants were asked whether they preferred to mingle with their own community people and the answer completely supports the findings of the survey as well as the open-ended questionnaire. Two participants replied that due to lack of language proficiency and cultural difference, they did not want to mingle with the natives. The other two participants responded that even though they wanted to integrate with the natives, sometimes they failed to do so because of what they perceived as discrimination and more advantages to the native Canadians.

The remainder of the interview was on the role of the English language in their Canadian life. All the participants admitted that English played a vital role in the Canadian immigrants' lives. Without being proficient in English it is almost impossible to get a good job or good results in exams. Moreover, it is not possible to socialize with the native Canadians as well as the people of other countries and cultures without basic ability in the English language. As a result, they felt marginalized. Furthermore, the interviewees described their English use during a normal day. One of the interviewees, who is a house wife, and graduated from her native country's high school, said that she hardly spoke English during the day. Whenever there was a parents-teacher meeting in her children's school, her husband who worked in an automobile company usually attended the parents-teacher meetings as she was not able to understand the teacher and could not convey the appropriate messages to her children's teacher. Because of the language barrier, she rarely mingled with the natives and that caused alienation from the mainstream society. The interviewees, who worked in different companies for their livelihood, said that they used English throughout the whole day. And they were comfortable speaking in English. One of the interviewees stated that he had many native Canadian friends now. But in the initial period, when he was having lessons to improve his English skills, he hardly used to talk to the natives because of the lack of proficiency in English. This statement also supports our first finding from the survey questionnaire.

These results provide a coherent picture about the Canadian immigrants' lives in their new intercultural setting and have exposed and emphasized the importance of English as a second language in their lives. It is quite obvious from the findings that the Canadian immigrants face difficulties at the very beginning, but as soon as they acculturate with the new environment, they feel comfortable and find themselves as a part of the society, though discrimination often causes disappointment.

5. Limitations of the Study

Although this study tries to offer well-supported arguments, the research has some limitations as well. The sample of the subjects for the open-ended questionnaire is not large enough; only ten immigrants were involved due to the immigrants' lack of willingness to provide answers which were longer or elaborate.. All the respondents involved in the study were Asian, so some subjective factors can be there which may influence the results of the study to a certain extent though the proper analysis of the data tries to overcome this limitation. Future studies should involve immigrants from different continents to get more reliable or generalizable results.

6. Conclusion

The study concerns Canadian immigrants who are believed to have acculturation and adaptation difficulties in a multicultural society. The research questions regarding Canadian immigrants' lives in their new intercultural setting as well as the role of English as second language in the immigrants' live were pursued using structured Likert-scale questionnaire, a set of open-ended questions and semi-structured interview. Research findings seem to support each other via these research instruments. They present an authentic scenario of the immigrants' lives in Canada. The findings reveal that most of the immigrants try to acculturate with the Canadian society. In fact, in the majority of cases, they are successful, for example, the immigrants, who have been living in Canada for a long time. They find this intercultural setting very comfortable and Canada a better place to live. On the other hand, discrimination and some undesirable social norms and practices sometimes cause unhappiness and discontent. The study also depicts the importance of the English language in the immigrants' lives in a primarily English speaking country. The immigrants who are fluent in English are more involved and well accepted in the Canadian society.

About the Authors:

Haja Mohideen Bin Mohamed Ali is an Associate Professor at the Department of English, International Islamic University Malaysia He obtained his PhD from Cardiff University, UK. He has published numerous articles and presented papers at various international conferences on applied linguistics & sociolinguistics.

Tasdiq Nomaira Alam obtained her Masters from International Islamic University Malaysia. She also earned her TESL diploma from College of Educators, Canada. She has several years of teaching experience in Middle East and East Asia.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Please fill in the blanks.

(All the information provided by the respondents will be highly confidential)

1. Country of origin: _____
2. How long have you been living in Canada? _____
3. What is the main purpose of your immigration to Canada?

Kindly circle the suitable number in each box from the following table where 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree.

4.	I felt cultural shock when I came to Canada for the first time.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I adjusted myself very fast with the new environment.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	To get a good job/good grades in the exams depends on my language proficiency level.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Hard work does not bring desired out come when I am	1	2	3	4	5

	not fluent in English.					
8.	I have difficulties understanding the lecture in the class/supervisor’s instruction in the workplace in terms of vocabulary and speed.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I get less social support compared to the domestic Canadians.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I have many native Canadian close friends who help me understand the lesson/activity/work.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I am highly involved with the class/social activities like the native Canadians.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The lecturers/supervisors/employers favor the native Canadians.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I prefer to mingle with my own community people as well as native Canadians.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I feel shy to participate in the class/society because of my lack of fluency in English.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	The support services (language courses/tutoring/supplementary courses) help to improve English proficiency.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I prefer to mingle with my own community people.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Please fill in the blanks with the correct answers:

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Country of origin: _____

Religious affiliation: _____

Length of residence: _____

Ethnic background: _____

Country of origin: _____

Circle the correct answers:

Social status: Married/Single

Highest level of education completed: Primary school/ High school/ Bachelor’s degree/ Master’s degree/ PhD

Kindly answer the following questions.

1. What is the main purpose of your immigration in Canada?

2. What is the aspect that you are comfortable with as an immigrant of Canada (Please explain with reference to the culture of majority Canadians)?

3. What are those aspects which you cannot accept or less comfortable with (if any)?

4. Do you want your children to grow up in Canada? Why?

5. Do you eventually want to return to your country of origin? Why?

6. Are you making any attempts to integrate with other Canadians? How? What are the problems doing that (if any)?

7. Do you encourage your spouse to socialize with Canadians/ improve language proficiency?

8. Do the migrated older women lead secluded lives in Canada (according to your perception)?

9. _____ What are the specific areas
of Canadian life you adapt/acclurate to?

10. What is your contribution to Canada?

11. Do you feel discriminated/marginalized?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. What has been the most difficult thing about adjusting to life in Canada?
2. Describe how you use English during a normal day.
3. What have been the most difficult things about learning English in Canada?
4. What are the easiest things about learning English?
5. Is it difficult to make small talk with the native speakers? (Why?/ Why not?)
6. Do you prefer to mingle with your own community people? Why?/Why not?

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Tasdiq Nomaira Alam obtained her Masters from International Islamic University Malaysia. She also earned her TESL diploma from College of Educators, Canada. She has several years of teaching experience in Middle East and East Asia.

We hereby attest that the article submitted is our original work. Sources of reference are duly acknowledged.