

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

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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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