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Culture Shock on Learning of International Students in India

V. Selva Lakshmi¹ and S. Ramachandran²

¹ Research Scholar, Sathyabama University, Asst Prof, SRM Valliammai Eng College, Chennai, Email: selvalakshimimba@gmail.com

² Rector, AMET University, Email: director.bschoo1@ametunin.ac.in

Abstract: India is a desirable destination for students who seek higher education for mainly three reasons. One is that the cost of education is relatively low, the second is that the duration taken to complete the courses is also less when compared to their western counterparts and most importantly the quality of education provided is good. Henrichsen (1998) gives several ideas as to how students can bridge the gap between their native culture and the host culture. This research study is exploratory in nature. It is designed to assess the effects of variables such as gender, country, duration of stay in India, personality traits, motivation and culture shock on the English Language Learning experience in India and language achievement. This project aims to determine whether and in what manner these variables are related. After extensive reading and formulating the research problem the approach decided upon was quantitative, as the results obtained needed to be precise. The determined sample size is 166. The hypothesis formulated are 1. Culture shock has no effect on English Language Learning of International students in India who are studying at the tertiary level. 2. All three factors—personality, motivation and culture shock have the same effect on English Language Learning of international students in India. The conclusion of the research has explored in depth the effect of culture shock on various factors. The first ‘Culture shock affects English language learning of international students in India who are studying at the tertiary level. The second “Geographical distance of native country from host country influences the degree of culture shock’ has also been proven true.

Keywords: Cultural Shock, English Learning Language, Personality, Motivation etc

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Shock

From the 1970s India has seen an influx of foreign students seeking admission into universities mainly in the metropolitan cities. India is a desirable destination for students who seek higher education for mainly three reasons. One is that the cost of education is relatively low, the second is that the duration taken to

complete the courses is also less when compared to their western counterparts and most importantly the quality of education provided is good. Although universities are found all over the country, that is, almost one in every district the reason they choose to study in the metropolises like Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi is that the ambience and atmosphere is conducive for assimilation into the new culture. There seems to be more tolerance and acceptance of foreign cultures in metropolitan cities as they themselves are melting pots of cultures.

Factors Affecting Language Learning

Culture shock

One cannot ignore the role of culture in the language learning process. When students move from their native country to another country to learn a language and acquire an academic degree in the new language (English) they experience a psychological disorientation resulting from the differences in their native culture and that of the host country. This phenomenon can have a profound effect on their cognitive abilities, thereby affecting their ability to learn the L2. Although culture shock as a concept is ancient and dates back to the times of the Greek civilization when students travelled from one country to another for their education, it is a fairly new construct in terms of psychological study in education. This research project undertakes to study the effect of three factors- personality, motivation and culture shock on English language learning of international students in India. It is useful to have an idea of how English language teaching evolved over the years in the sub-continent.

Learner's beliefs about language learning

Cleaner's Affective States

Anxiety

E. Age

Gender

Motivation

Students who come from outside India have had little or no exposure to English at all. There is no screening and streamlining process for these students into appropriate classes. They go into classes without prior training in English. Some of them have appeared for qualifying exams in their countries, some others have studied English in their primary education but without much opportunity for practice, while some attend English courses at private institutions where the Cambridge Interchange Program is taught for six months before they join college. Most of the above are apparently inadequate preparation for the courses of study that students will undergo in the university program. Along with this international students face the problems of being away from home, being in an alien environment where everything is different, new and sometimes frightening. Most of the students go through a process of acculturation where one of the stages is that of culture shock. It is generally thought that this is not a serious issue and students will surely overcome this with time. However, this research project attempts to unearth the truth behind this myth and ascertain to what extent this state of mind affects students' learning capacity, especially that of English.

BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Schumann (1986, p. 379) acculturation is when the learner is most comfortable socially and psychologically with the speakers of the target language group. He reiterates that only when the learner makes an effort to assimilate himself into the target language group will he be able to learn the language successfully. Brown's Optimal Distance Model suggests that a learner must be an optimum distance from both cultures, that is, from his own home culture and from the culture of the target language. We find that Schumann's model is stronger than that of Brown's but the focus is similarly on the importance of the level of learner acculturation. Both models point to the fact that acculturation is directly proportional to second language learning.

Henrichsen (1998) gives several ideas as to how students can bridge the gap between their native culture and the host culture. Culture assimilators and cultoons help students interpret the meaning of the behaviour and speech of people they interact with. Cultural Capsules (Singhal, 1998) and Culturgrams (Peck, 1998) expose students to foreign civilization, thereby drawing comparisons between home culture and target culture

Holliday (1994: 29) argues that the typical teacher in the context of expatriate teaching will be in touch with several cultures. One would be that of the teacher himself, another would be the culture of the target language and the third that of the students. The culture of the academic discipline also would have to be taken into account here. In order to be effective in their teaching it is imperative for teachers to take into account all of these cultures and how they influence the attitude and style of their students. It is important for them to work with the cultures they encounter rather than trying to impose upon the students their own cultures. Teachers should be aware that there is a diversity of culture even if the nationality of their students is homogenous. This is the case even if the teacher's nationality is the same as that of his/her students. This brings us to the fact that teachers also carry their own cultural baggage. Kramsch acknowledges that learning a second language necessarily involves learning about the cultures associated with it. Nevertheless, it does not mean that students ought to assimilate all that the other culture offers or represents. She feels that there must be a 'border zone' between the target culture and the local culture. This enables both teachers as well as learners to meaningfully interact with each other in a cultural context. Thus we see that the researchers mentioned above are of the opinion that the importance of the official teaching curriculum is not as important as the emphasis that must be given to the concern for culture.

Byram (1997: 1) opines that in order to develop familiarity with any culture one should actually live within that culture for a considerable amount of time. Being a tourist constitutes looking at the culture from the outside, rather than being a sojourner, wherein one is actually an active participant in the functioning of the community. (Barro et al, 1998: 83). According to Byram inter-cultural communicative competence is a conglomeration of these components: knowledge, attitude, skills of interpretation and comparison, and skills of discovery and interaction (p. 307). These attributes are essentially those which are inherent and can be developed without the intervention of an educational institution, Byram feels that they should be taught in a classroom setting.

Pica Kanagy, and Faldown (1993) classify tasks according to the type of interaction that occurs in task accomplishment and give the following classification:

1. Jigsaw tasks: These involve learners combining different pieces of information to form a whole (e.g., three individuals or groups may have three different parts of a story and have to piece the story together).

2. Information-gap tasks: One student or group of students has one set of information and another student or group has a complementary set of information. They must negotiate and find out what the other party's information is in order to complete an activity.
3. Problem-solving tasks: Students are given a problem and a set of information. They must arrive at a solution of the outcome.
4. Decision-making tasks: Students are given a problem for which there are a number of possible outcomes and they must choose one through negotiation and discussion.
5. Opinion exchange tasks: Learners engage in discussion and exchange of ideas. They do not need to reach an agreement. Tasks also have dual characteristics such as being one way or two ways-involving exchange of information. They could be convergent or divergent i.e., whether the students achieve a common goal or several different goals. The students may also collaborate or compete with each other to carry out a certain task. The outcome of the task may be single or multiple. Sometimes the task may require concrete language and at other times abstract language. The tasks may also be set either in real world situations or is a pedagogical activity not found in the real world. The exponents of the Task-Based Instruction method support the use of authentic tasks backed up by authentic materials wherever possible. Popular media provide a wide source of resource materials and some of the following tasks can be built around such media products

Krashen and Terrell make continuing reference to the theoretical and research base claimed to underlie the Natural Approach and to the fact that the method is unique in having such a base. "it is based on an empirically grounded theory of second language acquisition, which has been supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts" (Krashen and Terrell 1983: 1)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study is exploratory in nature. It is designed to assess the effects of variables such as gender, country, duration of stay in India, personality traits, motivation and culture shock on the English Language Learning experience in India and language achievement. This project aims to determine whether and in what manner these variables are related. After extensive reading and formulating the research problem the approach decided upon was quantitative, as the results obtained needed to be precise.

Null Hypotheses

1. Culture shock has no effect on English Language Learning of International students in India who are studying at the tertiary level.
2. All three factors- personality, motivation and culture shock have the same effect on English Language Learning of international students in India

Alternative Hypotheses

1. Culture shock affects English Language Learning of International students in India who are Studying at the tertiary level.

2. of the three factors- personality, motivation and culture shock- the most significant in English Language Learning of international students in India is culture shock.

RESULTS

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Maximummarks</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personality (total)	166	50	23 - 48	36.67	5.02
EXTROVERSION	166	10	2 - 10	6.88	1.74
AGREEABLENESS	166	10	2 - 10	7.51	1.84
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	166	10	3 - 10	7.63	1.56
EMOTIONAL STABILITY	166	10	3 - 10	6.95	1.56
OPENNESS	166	10	2 - 10	7.7	1.71
CULTURE SHOCK	166	50	16 - 47	31.83	6.33
MOTIVATION (total)	166	50	26 - 50	50	6.33

Comparison of Test score by Country

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Teststatistic</i>	<i>P value</i>
Country					
ARAB	54	3.37	1.26	F = 13.565	0.000*
IVORY COAST	39	5.05	1.81		
IRAN	33	4.64	1.56		
ASIA	25	5.84	1.51		
OTHERS	15	4.70	1.60		

From this table we see that students from Arab countries have the lowest mean score- 3.37 and students from Asian countries have the highest score of 5.84. The p value for test score for Arab students is 0.000. *There is a significant difference between countries in the mean score for culture shock. This shows that culture shock affects their language learning achievement.

Correlation of English learning language and experience with cultural shock, personality and motivation

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Max score</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	<i>P value</i>
English Language learning Experience	100	36-100	63.12	11.18		
Culture shock	50	16-47	31.83	6.33	-0.286	0.000*
Personality	50	23-48	36.67	5.02	0.054	0.487
Motivation	50	26-50	50	5.18	0.026	0.740

As seen from the table above the coefficient of correlation for motivation and English language learning experience is 0.026 and the p value is 0.740. When compared to culture shock which has a p value

of 0.000 and coefficient of correlation is -0.286. *Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 and so we conclude that culture shock is significantly correlated with English

Language learning experience.

CONCLUSION

The research has explored in depth the effect of culture shock on various factors. The first 'Culture shock affects English language learning of international students in India who are studying at the tertiary level. The second "Geographical distance of native country from host country influences the degree of culture shock' has also been proven true. However the third factor is that female students are not as greatly affected by culture shock as male students are, where English language learning is concerned. Among the three factors- personality, motivation and culture shock, the one that has the strongest relationship with English language learning is culture shock.

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