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What is the Level of Investment by International Students in the US in English Language
Learning outside the Classroom? What are the Factors that Affect their Investment?

By

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An Alternate Plan Paper Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United States hosts more international students than any other country according to the Institute of International Education report (2009). It seems that American campuses are the favorite destination of international students who want to pursue a foreign degree and learn English. As a consequence of this incremental rise in student numbers, American campuses have become more diverse (Debard, 2004).

Upon their arrival in the United States, international students face the challenge of finding out the way to get access to a target language group. Therefore they seek opportunities offered on campuses, in the community, in the home and the workplace. Although international students may be willing to expose themselves to the target language to the fullest in order to successfully learn it, they may not achieve their goals because of multiple factors that may affect their level of engagement; such as motivation, acculturation, the relation of power, and identity.

Investigating the exposure of international students to English outside the classroom can lead to a better understanding of the factors that help or hinder their acquisition. Therefore, in order to find out more about my own context, I began interviewing fifteen two semester-long international students at my own institution. The questions I asked pertained to how these students invested themselves in the learning of English, beginning with their arrival and continuing throughout their stay, and what kinds of difficulty they encountered during that time. When I asked if they had noticed some progress in any of the four language skills, the question

generated many different responses. For most of them, however, they believed that their listening and speaking skills had improved much more drastically than their reading and writing, although some expressed improvement in the literacy skills. A few, however, were not sure whether they had made any progress during their time in the U.S. When I asked these students what they had done specifically to improve their English, I was surprised at how little forethought they had given to their language acquisition. Almost all of the students replied that they expected improvement to happen as a bi-product of attending class and doing homework. They did not think they should or had to work on it outside of their classes, and they did not employ specific learning strategies.

All of the students who were interviewed had experienced difficulties in establishing any real friendships with target-language native speakers. They found their relationships with native speakers to be very superficial. According to some international students I interviewed, native speakers on campus appreciate talking to them, listening to them but did not seem to be interested in any kind of close relationship. This may be due to cultural differences or the way international students view friendship as compared to Americans. While it appears that this affects them, they seem to understand it as they link it to different cultural perceptions. They also think that having a close American friend may be seen as a good opportunity to practice their English and understand more about American culture.

Speaking with these students made me curious as to why they had not put more thought and effort into their learning and what kinds of factors prohibited them from doing so even when they knew that strategies would be helpful. The students' comments provided me with enough information to start asking some questions that in turn led me to some well-known second-language acquisition theories in order to understand the nature and the complexity of

international students' access to English and propose some solutions for their success in higher education in the United States.

One issue that arose in talking to these students was their level of motivation. Often, if a learner fails to learn a language, it is viewed as his or her fault and likewise if he or she succeeds at learning it, it is often said that these learners were highly motivated. The cause and effect relationship between motivation and second-language acquisition will largely be discussed here in of light Gardner's Social Psychological Theory (1978), and his description of two types of motivation: instrumental and integrative motivation. The discussion also includes a range of motivational studies to help gain more insight into the role of motivation and the factors that affect motivation. It is hoped that implications can be made so that academic institutions and international offices in charge of international student orientations are better equipped to advise their students on the importance of motivation during their studies.

The research will also revisit Schumann's acculturation model according to which "learners will acquire the target language to the degree they will acculturate to the target language group," (1986, p. 379). This should help understand the concept of social and psychological distance or proximity to the target culture and their importance for the learner. As a result of the interviews, it was clear that these students were interested in having more exposure to the target language group, but that they understood they did not have control over this aspect. This issue is consistent with some of the acculturation factors we will address in chapter two. For example, the international students expressed the need to be socially integrated in the target group and develop sufficient contact with the target language, or at least be open to the target-language group, so that their interactions would result in intake.

The international students interviewed were also confronted with the problem of entry into target-language groups. Some mentioned that because of the inferiority of their English proficiency compared to target-language speakers, it was difficult to claim equitable status in those groups. Some students experienced difficulties in describing, what I will consider, the relation of power. Although they wanted to speak with some native speakers, they found they did not have any control over when this was possible. Consistent with Norton (1996), we are dealing with complex social and power relationships that shape the identity of international students in their quest to learn English. Drawing on Weedon, Norton defines “the multiple nature of the subject; subjectivity as a site of struggle; and subjectivity as changing” (p.15). This is observable in the attitudes of different nationalities present on campus and how they define their relationships with their American peers, in contrast to maintaining their relations with their country fellows.

These international students’ testimonials have revealed that they were confronted by certain acculturation problems during their stay. Even though, research has documented the phenomenon of acculturation for immigrants and Americans studying abroad, the case of international students requires further inquiry. These students appear to require more awareness of the need to adopt certain behaviors and strategies to cope with their transition to becoming speakers of English in order to improve on both their social experiences and on the success of their studies in the United States.

In chapter two, the paper will revisit theories pertaining to motivation, acculturation, access, power, and identity in second-language learning in order to understand best the complex nature of the exposure of international students to English outside classroom. In chapter three, the paper will suggest some concrete applications on the basis of our knowledge and

understanding of chapter two. It will suggest some attitudes, behaviors and activities that can be undertaken in order to find some tentative solutions to the problems of acculturation that our international students face. In chapter four, the paper will briefly summarize what we know from the standpoint of research on the different factors influencing the exposure of international students. The paper will leave to future researchers to explore more avenues in the hope that they will provide us with some answers to questions that have not yet been addressed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the predominant theories on some individual factors influencing second-language acquisition. These factors include motivation, acculturation and identity. First, the chapter explores Gardner's motivational theory and its significance as a contributing factor in the development of second language acquisition. In tackling other factors influencing second-language learning, the chapter examines the conditions under which learners' acculturation can positively or negatively affect their learning. Finally, the discussion seeks to understand the multiple identities of learners once they leave their home and find themselves in the target language context, and how their identity can impact their successful learning of the target language.

Motivation

In 1972 Gardner asked how it is that some people successfully learn a foreign language in a reasonable amount of time, while others exposed to the same opportunities fail to do so. To explain this, Gardner reviewed many possibilities such as individual differences, pedagogical procedures, and predispositions to learn languages. At that time, based on his studies of Carroll (1956), Mackey (1967), Delaunay (1970), etc. who found that there must be a rationale that would explain the successes and failures of learners more specifically than simply having a "knack for languages." As a result, Gardner came up with his Social-Psychological Theory, which maintained that, "successful learners of a second language must be psychologically

prepared to adopt various aspects of behavior which characterize members of another linguistic cultural group” (1972, p. 3). According to Gardner, learners’ ethnocentric tendencies as well as their attitudes toward the members of other groups are paramount to their success or failure in learning a new language. Ultimately, he settled on two types of motivation as the main force in a learner’s ultimate attainment of the target language: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. The former relates more to the attitudes of the learner toward other cultures, while the latter pertains to more utilitarian objectives that second language acquisition will help learners to achieve in life.

According to Gardner (1985) learners who are integratively-oriented are more likely than other learners to be successful at learning a second language. However, instrumental motivation is also conducive to language learning as long as the learner is engaged in the reasons why he or she is learning the second language. Schumann (1986) agrees that once an instrumentally oriented learner has achieved his or her goal, such as developing survival skills in the target language, he or she will no longer be motivated to learn the language. Having met their objective, they will content themselves with the knowledge gained.

Gardner (1985) defined motivation as “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p.10). His definition highlights the necessary effort that a learner must put forth to achieve a goal. Gardner later became critical of his own motivational theory, finding that a learner could devote considerable effort to learning a language in order to please his teacher or parent even though he is not motivated to learning. Therefore, Gardner determined that effort is not by itself a complete description of motivation, and believed that effort, desire, and satisfaction are necessary to properly discuss motivation in language learning.

Arguably, most of the major studies in the field of motivation have struggled to understand the complex nature of motivation, which has mostly been seen as a factor that depends on the individual, assuming that success or failure in learning a second language will rest mainly upon the individual's own shoulders, rather than linked with the social environment. Studies such as Liuolne and Metiunene (2006) and Crookes and Schmidt (1991) have found this weakness in Gardner's theory as it is related primarily to language learning outside of the classroom. For example, Liuoliene and Metiunene (2006) have extensively discussed Gardner's theory about integrative and instrumental motivation and their importance in second language learning, however, they echo the reproaches that limit the theory as it would be interesting to know how these types of motivation would impact the syllabus, teachers, lesson plans and learner's motivation. This interest in classroom learning has prompted modifications to Gardner's theory to address classroom situations.

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) were early questioners of the foundation of Gardner's theory of integrative and instrumental motivation. They found that there was not enough empirical evidence to back the assumption that integrative motivation is the cause of second-language achievement. Schmidt and Crookes favored an approach that they felt better suited to second-language education. They came up with four areas of second language motivation: the micro level, the classroom level, the syllabus level, and factors outside of the classroom situation. The micro level involves the cognitive aspects of the language learner where the second-language learner attempts to make sense of the amount of language he faces. The classroom level relates to the kinds of techniques and activities a language teacher uses in the classroom. The syllabus level relates to the subject area; the specific interests carried by the

language materials presented in the classroom. The last factor pertains to the informal contact between the learner and the target-language group outside the classroom.

- Schmidt and Crooks did not list these four categories in terms of importance, but they did indicate how learners find their motivation in each of them. At the micro level, teachers will know that the learner is motivated by the amount of attention given to the input. At the classroom level, the learner motivation depends on the expectancy of success and the amount of control over activities. At the syllabus level, learners' motivation can spring from the content of the texts chosen by the instructors as this may trigger a sense of curiosity in them. Finally, at the level of factors outside the classroom, learners' motivation may result from their need to establish contact with the target group. Having investigated three motivational psychology theories: expectancy-value theory, self-determination theory, and goal-directed theory. They conclude:
 - Learning motivation is a driving force in learning a foreign language,
 - Students' wishes and needs to work independently depend on their motivation, attitude and responsibility, and
 - The higher motivation, the more autonomous learning students want to have in the learning process.

Despite some criticisms to his motivational theory, (Gardner 1972, Luioliene & Metiuniene, 2006 and Schumann, 1986) have evidenced the crucial role of motivation in language learning. Furthermore, they have underlined the necessity for learners to adopt a variety of behaviors that characterize the target language group in order to successfully learn the language. If it is true that integrative and instrumental motivation are paramount in successfully

learning a language, international students will need to understand their motivation and act on it accordingly.

Some studies (e.g. Hernandez 2010, Garcia, 2006, Dornyei 2001) have confirmed the role of motivation in the learning of a second language and the improvement of speaking proficiency in the study abroad context. For example Balstone (2002) states that study abroad programs offers international students many ways to interact with native speakers of the target language. They use the target language to exchange information, engage in social activities, and participate in interpersonal functions. It seems understandable that frequent and sustained interaction is a crucial element in improving language skills in a study-abroad program. Considerable language gains result from the students' interaction with native speakers (Gainsburg & Miller, 2000).

Since it was assumed by many researchers that study abroad was superior to instruction at home, Garcia (2006) measured the impact of attitudes, motivation and social interaction on the speaking performance of four study-abroad participants in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The students in her study were given the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) at the beginning and end of their experience in order to measure their speaking improvement. Proof of the students' attitudes, motivation, and interaction with native speakers of Spanish was evidenced by their diaries, questionnaires, and their representation of their social networks. The findings established a correlation between the students' interaction with native speakers of Spanish and the improvement of their speaking proficiency after a semester study-abroad. As for motivation, she showed how for at least one student their high integrative motivation to study Spanish and understand the new culture, helped this participant gain access to social network ties with Argentines, and lead to notable progress in his language acquisition.

Hernandez (2010) similarly investigated the role of integrative and instrumental motivation in twenty students' speaking performance after their participation in a semester-long study-abroad program in Spain. A two-part questionnaire including a language contact profile, and a pre- and post-experience SOPI were administered. He found that students improved their L2 speaking proficiency during a semester study abroad program. He also found a positive relationship between students' integrative motivation, and their interaction with the L2 culture. Finally, he found that students' contact with the Spanish language had a significant impact on their speaking improvement.

Students who did not improve their speaking attributed it to the lack of finding social network ties in the target culture. Those who improved related their progress to the time they spent with their host family speaking Spanish without any fear of making mistakes. For some their success was due to the multiple conversations they had with their host mother as this created confidence in them to speak to other native speakers. These results are based on the studies that Hernandez (2006) mentioned.

In discussing the results of these study-abroad programs in Spain, it appears that the programs were instrumental in the development of student-speaking proficiency as they were able to use Spanish outside the classroom situation in order to interact with the target culture. This is evidenced in the opportunities students had to speak Spanish with their host families, their Spanish friends, their language-exchange partners, and in bars and restaurants. They also used Spanish while they were shopping or making travel plans. Some students in (in answering a question related to the amount of contact they had with the Spanish language outside classroom, students said they have found) the found additional ways of improving their speaking through listening to music, watching TV, reading email, visiting websites, and reading newspapers in

Spanish. International students in the U.S. should capitalize on these various ways of exposure to the target language in order to improve their English.

Gardner's motivation theory has cast the basis for a better understanding of the role of motivation in second-language learning. Even though it has been criticized, theorists have drawn on it and expanded on it to show the ways motivation effects second-language learning and how it's impact can best be assessed. The motivational theory by Gardner could be explained to international students so that they can understand its value and adopt subsequent behaviors to achieve a successful learning of English

Acculturation

One researcher who utilized the same definition of motivation as Gardner, but who attempted to add additional contextual variables to his theory of second-language acquisition was Schumann (1986). Schumann's Acculturation Theory predicts that, "learners will acquire the target language to the degree they will acculturate to the target language group" (p. 379). He described a set of variables that could be combined to create continuum of social and psychological distance experienced by the learner from the target culture and language. He theorizes that as a learner reduces this distance, he or she will also more successfully acquire the target language. If the learner is not socially restricted from or psychologically reluctant to engaging with speakers of the target language, he or she may, as a result of this exposure, experience intake of the target language.

Schumann's model includes a number of social variables: attitudes toward the target culture, social dominance pattern, cultural congruence, cultural integration strategies including assimilation, preservation and adaptation, enclosure, cohesiveness, size, and length of residence. In one condition under which a learner will acquire the target language, a learner holds positive

attitudes toward the target group to such an extent he or she will consider the target group as a reference group. The learner is viewed here as a xenophile with a strong desire to adopt the lifestyles and value of the target group. Another factor that inhibits second-language acquisition according to Schumann (1978) is the pattern of *social dominance* found within the given context. He suggests that the economic, cultural, political, and technical inferiority or dominance of the adopted culture of the second-language learner group will negatively affect their learning of the language. He found that learners would experience social distance if they were perceived to be inferior or subordinate to the target language group.

Cultural congruence also is among the factors affecting second-language learning. When there are more similarities between the target-language group's culture and that of the second-language group social contacts may be easier to established and should positively affect acculturation, while the covers is also expected to be true. A fourth factor affecting second-language learning is the pattern of *cultural integration*. Schumann defines three levels of integration as assimilation, preservation, and adaptation (1976, 1978). If international students choose preservation as their integration strategy, they want to stick to their own way of living and values and reject those of the target language group. This typical situation is ineluctably conducive to social distance between the two groups under which it will be difficult for second language group to learn the target language.

Enclosure, cohesion, group size, and length-of-residence round out social distance. Schumann defined *enclosure*, as the extent to which the second-language group and the target-language groups attend the same schools, churches, recreational centers, etc. In this situation, the enclosure is considered as low, but when the two groups do not share in common the same churches, schools and recreational centers, crafts, professions and trade, the enclosure is high. In

such a case, there is social distance as there are few opportunities for learning the target language. As for *cohesion*, Schumann theorizes that if the second-language learner group is cohesive, its members will naturally be tempted to form their own inner circle inside the target language environment. Likewise, if the *size* of the second-language group is large, the contacts between its members will more likely and more frequent. The last variable, *length-of-residence*, relates to the second-language group's intent to stay permanently in the target-language culture as opposed to returning to their country of origin. A prolonged or permanent stay in the target culture would tend to develop the second-language more fully than would a short stay.

In addressing psychological distance as a factor influencing second language acquisition, Schumann mentions language and culture shock, motivation, and ego permeability experienced by learners upon their arrival in a target language environment. *Cultural shock* can be defined as a condition of disorientation affecting someone who is suddenly exposed to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes. This can frustrate the learner to the extent that he will develop a defensive attitude toward the target language and culture. Schuman, who defines motivation in the same way as Gardner (1985), found that under such psychological conditions a learner's *motivation* may be negatively impacted. *Ego permeability* is the ability to see one's self in a new light as a speaker of the target language and a resident of the target culture. Without this perspective, Schumann states that learners will not be able to acculturate. An awareness of these different aspects of acculturation could help international students during their adjustment to their new environment.

However, Schmidt (1983), a vocal critic of Schumann's acculturation model, found that although, Wes, the participant in his case study, fulfilled the conditions of social and psychological proximity to English speakers, as observed by Schmidt, he did not achieve

linguistic competence in English. According to Schmidt, Wes had only developed an appreciable level of communicative competence in English despite his extensive interaction with target-language speakers and a high-level of motivation to learn English. Schumann's Acculturation Model, however, should help us to consider the conditions under which learners acculturate with the potential to affect either positively or negatively the development of the second language.

For example, Lybeck (2002) has tried to resolve some criticisms of Schumann in order to gauge the impact of acculturation on second-language pronunciation. Lybeck in an attempt to resolve the difficulty of accurately measuring acculturation as defined by Schumann used Milroy's social network theory (1987). She conducted a study of the acculturation experiences of nine American women residing in Norway. The study reveals that the women in the study who established positive network ties with native speakers improved their pronunciation as compared to those who were not able to do so. This is illustrated by the most successful learners' testimonial that their status as spouses of Norwegians had made easier their access to a Norwegian network. One participant stated that their status as a first-time mother helped her to integrate into a supportive social group.

However marrying a target-language speaker is not always conducive to supportive social networks in the target group. One of the participants who was married to a Norwegian native speaker did not improve her pronunciation, which she felt was due to the lack of support she received from her husband's family. Even though getting married to a native speaker and having children in the target culture can be helpful, it is not a guarantee of success. Neither does it stand to reason to do it for the sake of learning a second language.

Other participants chose to attend churches schools or other organizations with native speakers of Norwegians in order to improve their linguistic and social situations. These

participants were not always successful due to some cultural differences between Americans and Norwegians, for example the American women's perceived negative attitudes of Norwegians toward Americans. Lybeck (2002) concluded that the participants' successful or unsuccessful experiences with learning Norwegian were influenced by their own identities as Americans since Norwegians appeared to prefer speaking English with them instead of using Norwegian. Successful participants also recognized that they had developed a new identity in the target culture. Arguably, the American women who accepted this new identity were able to improve their Norwegian pronunciation while those who did not either did not improve or failed to learn Norwegian to any useful level. The women in the study were influenced by their attitudes, perceptions, and cultural identity. If this measurement of acculturation is accurate, then it should be true for international students as well, in that their successful learning of English will largely depend on how they choose to make inroads into supportive target-language networks. Other scholars such as Ochs (1992) and Norton (1995) have underscored the importance of identity in second-language learning.

Identity

Ochs (1992) describes the notion of identity in immigrant language learning. She finds that there is a close link between language acquisition and a learner's social identity. According to Ochs, social identity is always changing whether a person is in an institution or in a community, depending on his or her role, relationships, and social statuses. In the course of life, people may claim different identities as well as assign new identities. In her analysis of children shifting identity, she described immigrant parents' reaction to their children learning English as ambivalent because they experience a sense of both pride and loss. The parents undoubtedly understand that learning the new language equates with transformation of family values, which is

ineluctable. During this process, children will be changing identity as far as their relations with their parents are concerned. The traditional family relations are reshaped as parents become dependent upon their children to interact with the outside world. In her theory, she finds that speakers, while interacting, try to establish their social identity and that of their interlocutors through their performance of social acts and stances. She refers to social acts as any socially recognized, goal directed behavior, such as making a request, contradicting another person, or interrupting someone (1990). Stance refers to a display of a socially recognized point of view or attitude (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989). Ochs (1992) recognized that the relationship between social identity and language is not a direct one but rather depends on the interlocutor's understanding of the specific discourse context. Therefore, she concluded that social identity is not explicitly inside the language but it is rather a social meaning that one usually interprets on the basis of his understanding of the meanings and stance enclosed in the linguistic construction.

Och's understanding of identity seems to be exemplified in the words of two young Somali men, Abdul and Said (Bigelow, 2010) who depict what they consider as the cultural dilemma young Somalis face in the United States:

Abdul: I would say the greatest... challenge or concern [for Somali teens] is identity of who they are versus where they came from versus what they are in the United States. So they do struggle with that a lot. Religion is very important in the identity. I have seen some of those students who learn the Qur'an and who try to say their prayers and generally they tend to be better behaved than a lot of teenagers.

Said: They become torn between these two cultures. There is the point.

The new culture is driving them forcefully. And the other culture is driving them on the other part. Basically they are in the middle between two different worlds and that is the dilemma. That is the struggle. Should I be a Somali, an African, and a Muslim...or more Americanized and do what any American teenager does?

(p. 94)

The two quotes clearly demonstrate that the Somali teens believe they have to make a choice between two identities that they see as completely separate from each other. According to Abdul, they are totally rooted in their previous culture where religion is very important to their lives, but also deeply rooted in the United States. In defining the identity of young Somalis, he believed that they were in a place neither Somali nor American. In his understanding, a person has to make a choice to be Somali or American, rather than a combination of both. . The Somali youths interacting in their schools and their communities carry this dilemma, and thus an identity that is always changing (Gilroy, 1993). For Ochs (1993), the way Somali youth look at the world will be largely influenced by their experiences on different sites. She finds that it is necessary for language researchers to capture the complex relationship between language and social identity.

Weedon (1987), known as a feminist poststructuralist, and other postmodern educational theorists, such as Cherryholmes, 1988; Giroux, 1988; and Simon, 1992, have found that the power of relationships between individuals, groups, and communities influence the life chances of individuals at a given time and place. Weedon (1987) contrary to other postmodern theorists has established a link between individual experience and social power within a theory of subjectivity. She defines subjectivity as “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world”

(p.32). Besides, she thinks “language is a place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed” (1997, p.21).

Norton (1995) has adopted Weedon’s perspective for the development of a comprehensive theory of social identity that includes the language learner and the language-learning context. Like Weedon, Norton holds a post-structural view of the language learner in a sense that the individual is seen as diverse, contradictory, dynamic, and multiple and de-centered. This is a close interpretation of what Norton called social identity which is considered a site of struggle. The individual here is portrayed as somebody with a changing identity whether his subject position is known as a teacher, mother, manager or critic. Some of these various identities may be in conflict with others. Rightly, the individual is not passive and is defined whether he or she is in the position of subject of or subjected to the power relationship within a particular site, community and society. She argues that second-language theorists have failed to point out the relationship between the language learner and the social world because they did not give a full account of social identity, which integrates the social learner and the language-learning situation. She also argues that second-language theorists did not adequately address how relations of power affect interaction between language learners and target-language speakers. In contrast to Gardner (1972), she illustrates that a learner can at times be motivated, extroverted, and confident, yet at other times be unmotivated, introverted and anxious. She is also critical of Schumann because he does not account for how social distance can be great in one situation, yet in another situation become minimal between a specific learner or group of learners and target-language individuals or the community.

According to Norton, the power relations in a society are a crucial element in the analysis of second-language learning. It becomes evident that a very motivated individual may not learn a second language because the power relationships do not allow him or her access to target-language speakers. Norton's study (1995) of the target-language experiences of five immigrant women living in Canada illustrates this. It shows how the women in her study created opportunities to speak English, interacted with native speakers, and, in some cases, refused to speak. For example, Eva, one of her participants, shared about the negative attitude a coworker, Gail, held towards her. Eva interpreted that Gail held this attitude because of Eva's immigrant status. Gail liked discussing popular culture, silencing Eva because of her lack of knowledge in this field. According to Norton, if Eva had been an Anglophone Canadian, she would have been in a position to challenge Gail. Instead, she found herself unable to fight the negative perception because of the immigrant construct through which she had defined herself. Even if she wanted to seize an opportunity to interact with people at work, she was not able to do so because of her subjective position and the participation of Gail in the discourse.

Despite real progress made in learning English, another participant, Martina, did not want to speak. She expressed that she felt stupid and inferior because she couldn't speak English fluently. However, Norton explained that Martina would take the floor under certain circumstances where she was not considered "a legitimate speaker" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 650). For example, she was able to confront her landlord, a surprise to herself, her children, and the landlord when the request of her landlord to pay rent a year in advance jeopardized her families living situation. Overcoming her subjective position during this Anglophone and immigrant interaction helped her overcome her fears of uneasiness with English. As a result she took the initiative to serve customers at her workplace and to challenge her teen-aged coworkers who had

previously ignored her and given her only cleaning assignments. She was able to reframe her relationships with them from co-workers to a domestic one where children are not allowed to impose authority over adults. This new frame allowed Martina to reject their orders and to see herself as a legitimate speaker (Norton, 1995, p.99). For Norton, Martina's social identity was a site of struggle, whereby she rejected her subjective position and established a counter discourse at her workplace.

Norton uses both Eva and Martina as examples of the relation between investment, social identity, and language learning. First of all, when Eva arrived in Canada, she was employed in an Italian store, but after a certain period of time, she quickly realized that she had to find a new job where she could practice her English in the workplace. This move has underlined the change of identity of Eva over time as she changed jobs. Although she accepted her position of subject to the discourse in the beginning, she started changing by claiming her right to speak in talking to her colleagues about her personal experience in the hope that her previous education and experiences would be recognized. As far as Martina is concerned, upon her arrival she had to rely on her children to get things done in her environment. She knew that she had to learn English in order to fulfill her parental duties. She was also convinced that she had to learn English in order to function in the Canadian society. All these imperious necessities came with a new identity for Martina. This is why Martina, like Eva, was able to respond to and create opportunities to speak English. Throughout their time in Canada, Eva and Martina overcame obstacles to learn English, but it was their resolve to rise to the challenges to their identities that helped them become legitimate speakers of English.

The intriguing experiences of Eva and Martina are evocative of the potential problems international students may face in the United States. It may be when they face such identity

threatening situations that they find ways to achieve success in higher education in the United States. If they are allowed to maintain support networks with only members of their first-language community, they may not have to fully participate in the cultural context around them. When students create apartment ghettos where they are unchallenged by the outside world, their language learning may be highly limited.

The review of literature has provided us with valuable information pertaining to the factors influencing the exposure of international students to English outside the classroom situation. In light of these considerations, international students should overcome as much as they can those factors that can present serious hurdles in achieving success in their studies in the United States. Teachers and educators should also find ways and means that will translate into a better teaching of international students.

CHAPTER THREE

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

After looking into various factors that influence the exposure of international students to English outside the classroom, this chapter will address the social challenges such as adjusting to a new environment, learning a new culture, facing loneliness, and losing social status, that international students face when they arrive in the United States to further their education. For their socialization, international students will experience difficulties understanding some types of language such as expressions and idioms frequently used by native speakers. The cultural imprint of some conversations makes it difficult for international students to follow their interlocutors. A discussion of the possible ways international students can capitalize on their exposure to the target language through different strategies supported by research is proposed in order to maximize their chances of successfully learning the target language. The recognition by international students of their own learning styles and the ones conducive to success in higher education is examined at the end of the chapter. This should help international students to expand their ways of learning in order to achieve success in higher education. Included in each section will be suggestions for how academic institutions can encourage the social success of these students by recognizing and integrating appropriate language and cultural issues, as well as individual learning styles into their orientations and teaching.

International-students' academic life is highly influenced by their social life; that is their interaction with other people once they come to the United States. Thomas and Anthens (1989) find that despite international students coming from a variety of political, social and cultural backgrounds, they tend to share common characteristics as they pursue their academic goals in the United States (Sakarurako, 2000). Upon their arrival, international students strive to form new local social networks due to a reduced reliance on their families and social networks back home. These new networks are often very different from what they were used to and these differences can sometimes lead to discrimination. For example, language discrimination can significantly limit international students from adjusting to their new social environment. According to Crawford (2000) many Americans are impatient with speakers whose accents are different from their own, or they have negative preconceived ideas of other cultures or nationalities. All these can be noticed during interactions with American classmates, when international students' accents or their inappropriate use of expressions interfere with communication. It may go even further in that many native speakers not only laugh at foreign accents but also think the accent is related to the intelligence of the speaker. One example, shared through personal communication, described a Japanese student, who because he was hardly intelligible when he spoke, was severely judged as being an inferior student. According to Bulhuis (1986), American students often show less interest in being close or trusted friends with international students after spending some time with them. This is exemplified by the testimonials of some international students I interviewed last summer as they were complaining about all the difficulty of finding American friends. None them had gotten an American friend although they indicated that they did have good classmates with whom they occasionally hung out.

The lack of social interaction language can be illustrated further in an expression like *get out of here* which literally means *leave* but can be used figuratively when the speaker is indicating that what their interlocutor has just said is amazing or unexpected. Statements such as *I'll call you* or *we'll get together* can set international students up for a disappointment if they are misinterpreted to mean something certain, when the speaker is merely indicating a possibility or even is just being polite. (Sakurako, 2000). According to Pederson (1991), statements made by the opposite sex, such as *stop by my place*, may also be misinterpreted by some international students as romantic invitations rather than politeness. International male students coming from conservative societies where women are discriminated against may find it difficult to accept women as their equals or female professors as having authority. Without understanding that they need to change their frame of reference toward women and experiencing negative or angry responses, some males may discontinue interacting with females altogether, which can further their prejudices and limit their ability to acculturate. Regardless of gender, international students may give up trying to form friendships with Americans altogether after experiencing numerous problems during cross cultural communication, or even discrimination, whether perceived or real (Bulthuis, 1986; Sakurako, 2000).

Preparing International Students for a Successful Social Experience in Higher Education

For native speakers of English, the examples of expressions in the previous paragraph are part of the politeness strategies used in social interactions to end a conversation. It is therefore important for international students to learn, whether through ESL classes, new student orientation, or first-year experience seminars, how to interpret the meanings of these expressions and to use them appropriately when interacting in English in order to ensure effective communication. International students should be taught politeness strategies that will equip them

with appropriate expressions of greeting, to start conversations, to make requests, to use back channeling, and other techniques that will allow them to operate effectively in their social and academic life.

It also seems important that university professors be trained to make careful word choices when dealing with international students. If university professors do not attend to this aspect of teaching and keep on using words and expressions that international students cannot comprehend, expectations for assignments will likely be misunderstood, which might decrease student motivation and increase professor irritation, thus present learning as a daunting task for people who are in transition to their new environment. International students must also work hard to become familiar with American spoken language used in academic settings or in informal situation in order to ensure successful experiences. Expressions such as *Cool, Dude!*, meaning *OK*, or *run across campus to bring a folder* when there is no actual urgency to the situation. may be completely misunderstood by international students who may only be able to interpret the literal meanings of such expressions. Some sites like www.about.com or www.eslcafe.com can help international students learn new idioms and slang used in informal situations, as well as language related to English for Specific Purposes, Business English, and making friends. These sites can also be useful to professors and school entities that deal with international student needs.

Cultural differences may also present some hurdles to international students' ability to operate successfully in their social relationships. Bulthuis (1986) finds that friendship is viewed differently in individualistic societies, such as the U.S., compared to how it is viewed in many other parts of the world. Friendship in America may be experienced by international students as less permanent and shallower than in other cultures. Bulthuis finds that international students may fall under a false impression due to the apparent friendliness of most people on American

campuses. He explains that *How are you?*, which is merely a form of greeting rather than a question, causes misunderstandings when international students interpret it as personal attention to them. They may be confused or frustrated that the speaker does not wait for an answer, and interpret the speaker or even all Americans as rude or insincere, so understanding the underlying meaning of the American greeting is not only important for internationals to understand, but also for them to be able to perform.

Religion can also play an important role in cultural customs and practices. According to Spinks and Wells, (1997) many people view their religion as the only true religion, and experience considerable social stress when they think their religious beliefs have not been respected. Since many Americans consider themselves to be Christian, tension may arise with students from different religious groups. One issue might be when students from other religions need permission to miss class or cause them not to participate actively in class. Muslims, for example, need to attend prayers or other functions and participate in religious practices such as fasting. In order to create a welcoming institution that will attract international students, university professors should be prepared to accept religious and cultural differences, and to be flexible when students ask for permission to attend religious events.

Pederson (1991) finds that international students generally encounter more problems in college than American students. International students' ill adjustment to their new environment and culture can lead to the development of crises in some instances (Sakurako, 2000), from experiencing severe loneliness and culture shock, or other symptoms due to stress. These problems often relate to dealing with roommates, finding friends, and lack of emotional support. To curtail the severity of the issues mentioned above and to encourage and expose internationals to positive social experiences during their stay in the United States, universities may use many resources to

reach these goals. For example, Bradley, et al. (1995) and Pedersen (1991) believe that universities should host cross-cultural counseling centers to help international students navigate these difficult moments, despite the possibility of student apprehension in using such centers. The creation of international student offices or centers with advisers and administrators available to tackle issues such as social life, culture, health care, banking, etc. that are likely to arise, will undeniably give a certain sense of security to international students.

For example, at Minnesota State University, Mankato, the International Student Office (ISO) organizes social and cultural events that highlight the specific food and cultural entertainment from a variety of countries, where international and American students can meet and learn about cultures represented on campus. Students are also encouraged to attend international movies. International movie clubs have the potential to create opportunities for international students to make new friends and meet with students from different colleges. As it is the case in Mankato, such movies and refreshments are free to encourage as many students as possible. A wide range of activities including sporting events, cultural presentations, and local field trips to help international students discover interesting areas are also provided.

At Minnesota State University, Mankato, the New Arrival dinner is a highlight where new international students are introduced to their host families for the first time. The Host Family Program is an invaluable instrument in helping international students experience social life in Mankato and gain emotional support from local residents willing to engage in cross-cultural experiences. After the international students meet their host family, they will hopefully make plans for interaction throughout the year. Those interactions may occur at the request of either the international student or the host family and include a visit to a local event, park or just a meeting in a restaurant or the family's home for lunch or dinner. Some families invite their student to

spend times with their extended family in order to expose them to a larger audience. Some take their student to events in the Twin Cities as well. These occasions are unique opportunities for both parties to get to know each other, and for the student to improve their understanding of American cultural practices and the language that goes with it. Here students are likely to develop the speaking and listening skills attested to by the international students in the study-abroad programs discussed in chapter two.

Other U.S. universities have particular ways of helping international students adjust to their new environments. For example, at San Diego State University (SDSU), they use an e-mail exchange called the Email Partners Program [<http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/isc/emailpartners.htm>]. The program pairs incoming international students with student volunteers who have been at SDSU for more than one semester. Their American peers help them answers questions related to housing, academic courses, life in the United States, shopping, and friends. Other examples of the sort can be found at the University of California at Los Angeles, [<http://www.saonet.cula.edu/intl/DISC/default.htm>]. One of their activities is a Welcome Dance when new students arrive on campus. All new international students are invited to attend this dance and meet other students from different countries and the personnel of the international office. All these initiatives tend to alleviate potential problems international students may encounter and pave the way for a softer transition.

With American campuses becoming more and more diverse, it seems crucial to focus on international student needs and successes in their American experience. Because the American campuses are reflecting more accurately the various cultures that make up American society, it can be even harder for internationals to adjust and learn appropriate norms now than ever. University professors and administrators should be aware of the problems met by international students upon

their arrival and help them adjust to their new environment. More activities that encourage interaction between international students and American students of diverse backgrounds should be created. Some studies have looked into ways of helping international students achieve success.

Multiple Ways of Socialization

As was seen in Kinginger (2008), international students can improve their speaking through time spent with a host family. Having a host family can offer international students the opportunity to repeatedly engage in various types of conversations, which may improve their confidence to speak the target language with others and reduce their fear of making mistakes. Research (Kinging (2008), Magnan and Back (2007) has substantiated that there is a relationship between students housing arrangements and their language development during the program. Of the sixteen students who improved on the SOPI in Kinginger's study, fifteen lived with a host family. Therefore, it is in the best interest of international students to take part in a host family program if arranged by their campus or study-abroad program, or if not, to find one on their own through some other institution, such as a community center, a church, or other off-campus association. However, international students should be aware that there are limitations to host family programs, in that some aspects hindered some students from improving their knowledge of the target language (Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998; Knight, 1998; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Kinginger, 2008). For example, an American student in Hernandez (2010) complained that she couldn't speak Spanish with her host mother because of the presence of two other American students in the same house. Another found out that her host parents did not interact much with her. Therefore, host institutions should place students where no else shares their first language and they should also advise the host family about the need of interacting with their students.

International student offices and administrators of study-abroad programs on American campuses must discuss with international students and underscore the importance of social interaction with native speakers for the development of speaking as demonstrated by the participants in Kinginger's study (2008). To this end, study abroad program administrators should advise and strongly encourage international students to participate in extra curricular programs in order to reach out to a larger and diverse audience. Such programs include all events, training, conferences, and social gatherings sponsored by their host institutions. Upon their arrival, international students should be asked about their hobbies and interests in order to find to find an exchange partner or a host family who share the same passions. This should create an environment where there will be more interaction. For example, students who are interested in a particular sport like basketball might be paired with a family that likes to play or watch basketball. Should native speakers manifest less interest in international students after a certain period of time, international students should try to remain positive. Even with less contact within the target group, they always come away with some language and cultural gains .When international students notice that their host family or "American friend" is showing less enthusiasm in meeting or talking to them, international students can try to recreate new ways of interacting by attending to what interests the host family or friends, or by offering what help they can to the host family, such as joining them in household chores, projects, child care, or seasonal tasks. Very often, international students have the wrong impression in their exchange with the target language group that they are the only ones who get something out the interaction. This attitude may overlook the fundamentals of such interactions, which are rooted in "give and take" principle. By helping the host family, they may find themselves better integrated into the family structure, and actually have more contact.

The Role of Motivation and Identity

Studies have also confirmed that both integrative and instrumental motivation can also help international students to improve their knowledge of the target language (Gardner, 1985). Based on the findings of Hernandez (2010), international students who manifest an interest in speaking English with native speakers of English both in the United States and when they travel abroad will improve their speaking. Here, Hernandez is referring to the role of integrative motivation in the improvement of speaking in his study. Drawing on the same study, international students who are instrumentally motivated can also improve their knowledge of the target language, as long as they are able to participate in meeting their goals for learning the language, as well as language learning. For example, if these students are persuaded that the mastering of the target language will help advance their professional career or will position them as potential contenders in the already saturated and demanding job market, then they will improve their language if they are also studying or otherwise engaging in their professional field.

University professors in developing their curriculum might include activities that focus on students' integrative or instrumental motivation. The same is true for study-abroad programs or international-student office managers who create activities that promote integrative motivation. Such activities that capitalize on integrative motivation may include international students interviewing native speakers of the target language. According to Hernandez (2006) interviews are an excellent way for learners to explore the language and be aware of the linguistic and cultural differences between their language and the L2. Instructors might also provide their students with opportunities to use the second language outside class by assigning them an exchange partner in a semi controlled environment. They can also encourage international students to participate in out of class activities such as groups created specifically to practice with target language mentors the

four language skills, speaking, writing, reading and listening. Hernandez confirmed that students who regularly attend these activities improve their knowledge of the target language.

Hernandez' study also revealed that students have shown some instrumental motivation for studying Spanish. Teachers could bring in guest speakers to talk about what one can do with a high-proficiency level in English. The guest speakers can also underline the importance of English in the United States and abroad. Instructors could also provide opportunities such as academic training, internships, or volunteer opportunities for international students to develop high-level competency in the target language, while engaging in the kinds of activities for which they want to learn English.

Besides the crucial importance of the activities mentioned above, international students will have considerable language gains and knowledge of the target culture if they use the Internet, radio, L2 satellite television and different forms of computer-mediated communication (Hernandez, 2006). Students are often familiar with this technology for keeping up with people and news in their home culture, so it would be helpful to transfer these skills to English-language sites and interacting with native speakers. They should also be told that developing a solid competence in L2 is a long journey, which requires efforts and serious investment of time. Instructors can help these students aim at more realistic expectations.

Before I reviewed the literature pertaining to my alternate paper, I was almost certain that learning a language would essentially depend on the motivation of the learner; motivation is the most important pillar in learning a second language. My beliefs were consistent with (Gardner, 1972) who found that integrative and instrumental motivations are at the heart of learners' successful acquisition of the target language. Therefore learning a language was such a simple equation as learners should deploy the maximum of efforts in order to see significant improvement

of their language skills. Schuman (1972) also added the notion of acculturation in second language learning; as for him, it is in the best interest of the learner to reduce the distance between him or her and the second language group. Until I read about the advocates of the social psychology championed by Weedon (1987) and Norton (1995) I was not aware of the role of identity in language learning. Motivational factors are no longer enough to explain successful acquisition of the second language as motivated learners' attempt to learn a language may be hampered by many factors such as the relation of power and their identity as a site of struggle according to Norton.

Because of this instructors should make students aware of the importance of those factors influencing their learning upon their arrival and help those experiencing difficulties in adjusting to their new environment. Failure to do so might jeopardize any successful learning of the second language even for highly motivated learners. This is the reason why instructors should help international students to be realistic about their objectives in learning a second language because of the complexity of second-language learning. For example, while students must be aware of the need to improve their pronunciation and should strive to be intelligible during interaction, instructors can advise them that this is not the only or even best indicator of their improvement in learning the target language. Other factors such as learning styles are deemed to play an important role in international student success in the United States.

International Student Learning Styles Across Cultures: Suggestions for Educators

As discussed in chapter 2, Schumann (1986) in his acculturation process has touched upon the role of culture in learning a second language. Like Schumann, Munford (1986) finds that there is a close relationship between learning and culture, which he defines as a number of commonalities of meanings, customs and rules that a group of people have in common (p. 116). It is in this shared environment that learning and development take place. Therefore one cannot deny

the relationship between culture and learning. It seems evident that the environment in which people grow should provide them with appropriate instruments to adapt. The appropriation of these instruments is facilitated by schools through a process called enculturation (Trommsdorf and Dasen, 2001, ; Crahay, 1999). Grahay (1999) finds that the differences in the way classrooms throughout the world function can be largely linked to cultural differences. Lattuca (2002) states that, “learning cannot be separated from the contexts in which it occurs,” and that we should “re-conceptualize cognition and learning as activities that occur through social interaction” (p.711). This situated learning defines learning as a social and cultural activity as opposed to an individual activity. This socio-cultural view underscores the importance of the immediate setting as well as the larger one in which it is embedded. When this multi-dimensional view of learning is applied to learning styles, they are influenced by the social context in which they have resulted.

Ngwainmbi (2004) found that the learning environment in Asia, more specifically in China, is authoritarian and expository. The Indonesia education system shares a lot of characteristics with the Chinese one as independent or critical thinking is not encouraged. What is sought here is deference to authority (Meyer and Kiley, 1997). Students from several parts of Asia learn to think first of the group before the individual. Therefore, it would be difficult for students coming from such backgrounds like in Indonesia to start a discussion or pose a question unless they are speaking for the group (Lewis, 1997, p. 16). The French school system, although it has known some reforms after World War II, remains a very traditional structure. According to Zanten (2002) the French school systems is known for its strict curriculum even though it gives more opportunities to students to express themselves compared to China and Indonesia.

Thus, university professors and administrators would do well to have an understanding of the differences, whether they exist in their actual learning styles or in the approach to learning

(Meyer and Kiley, 1998), that students might possess, and prepare to teach international students effectively. To achieve this goal, introductory programs that take into account the needs of international students should be implemented. These programs would look at a bigger picture of learning as a whole to develop seminars that provide students with adequate tools for success in higher education and with information related to classroom involvement, type of behavior, and critical thinking. The importance of such programs is to raise the awareness of international students about some learning strategies helpful in the United States.

Lashley and Barron (2005) studied the learning preferences of new students in hospitality and tourism programs in Australia and the United Kingdom. They state that most of the students from both countries have strong learning style preference which can pose some problems to professors and the planning of learning experiences in higher education. These students have shown their preference toward learning that are concrete rather than abstract, and active rather than reflective styles. Their learning styles were opposed to the reflective practitioners' style that their professors were trying to instill in them. This may cause some challenges as inappropriate teaching strategies can present some hurdles to these students. Besides that, the students from Confucian origins who were in Australia demonstrated learning styles that were totally different from their peers. They appeared to be at ease with abstract and reflective approaches; however, they did not appreciate active and concrete teaching strategies. The university professors in these instances did not understand the learning style preferences of all the students in an attempt to encourage students to adopt a more reflective approach to their studies. Had they recognized the diversity on campus and attempted to acknowledge the preferred learning styles of the students from different educational backgrounds, they might have had more success at moving students toward a more reflective approach.

Dun and Griggs (2000) note that it is important for university professors to explain learning styles to students in order to give them feedback for improvement on their learning. University professors need to plan their teaching and learning activities in a way that recognizes student learning preferences and the educational practice that best helps student learning. Tribe (2002) finds that educators need to understand the learning style preference of their students and to use learning and teaching strategies that develop different approaches to learning but which are compatible with students initial learning style preferences. Students should also be aware of their own learning styles and should make attempts to adjust to the new environmental requirements in order to succeed. This is so important because some students may continue applying the strategies that worked best for them back home even if they do not work in their new context.

Learning Styles: New Expectations

After teachers in host institutions have recognized the different learning styles of their students coming from diverse regions of the world, they should help them understand the way they are processing knowledge and adopt learning styles that are most consistent with the academic expectations in the American educational system. As Dunn and Griggs (2000) find, this is essential in helping students to improve their learning through the feedback they receive as they take active ownership of their learning and development. For example, the orientation at the University of San Jose in California has teachers who remind incoming international students of the differences between the expectations of their home educational systems and the new ones in the United States. Teachers focus on types of behavior that are expected in the American educational system, including class involvement where students are expected to read their material at home and prepare for class discussion. In the writing classes, students are asked to give their opinions on some conflicting situations on subjects related to ethical issues. The objective of these

activities is to raise student awareness of critical thinking. These and many other activities can be employed to engage learners in academic-language learning.

The underlying objective of this paper was to be able to come up with some tentative solutions and suggestions to the factors affecting the exposure of international students to English in the United States. These strategies could help students to be proactive in their acculturation in order to increase the likelihood of success in their studies. Educators and institutions also may subsequently become more critical of their own beliefs and ways of teaching to embrace research-based strategies and integrate them in to their teaching in order to promote learning. When educators and teachers rise to meeting such goals, they become advocates of more welcoming institutions that will attract more international students.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This paper investigates the exposure of international students to English outside of the classroom. This crucial objective has guided our steps toward motivational factors that play an important role in the learning of a second language. It has also led us to explore acculturation factors to help international students effectively adjust to their new environment upon their arrival in the United States. Finally, we were most concerned about finding international students' ways of accessing the target-language group. This literature helps us to better understand student obstacles to language acquisition.

It seems that the appreciable contribution of research in suggesting or solving the problems that international students face in their new environment does not answer all of our questions. More research needs to be done to shed light on areas such as motivation in order to know what exactly motivates an individual. It would be also interesting to know if neutrality is a negative affective variable compared to the integrative motivation as the latter has been extolled as a positive affective variable. Work specifically on international students in the U.S. also needs to be conducted.

It has been suggested in this paper that the adoption by international students of some attitudes about target-language groups are conducive to successful learning of English. International students are advised to strive to find supportive ties in the target-language group in order to have adequate networks with which to interact, thus positively impacting their language

learning. Staying with a host family was considered to be an invaluable contributor to their successful achievement of the target language.

The exposure of international students to English outside classroom situation is subject to overcoming many obstacles (Gardner 1985, Schuman 1986, Norton1995) that should help international students get access to the target language group. International students should in the light of Lybeck (2002) find a way to get engaged with the target groups through supportive exchange networks that will help them learn not only the language but also the culture. While they engage in such activities, they will reduce their cultural incongruence with the target-language group.

International students should also understand their own learning-style preferences (Sadler-Smith, 2004) and their new instructional environment and have necessary skills to succeed in their host universities. Newman, Parera, Mpujol (2003) found in a study of students from different backgrounds that they used four ways of processing information from text in order to achieve academic success. The more successful students used the “the planned information management” which details how they interact with the course content, to anticipate the informational demands of assignments and how to establish an order between exposure, extraction, manipulation and display in order to make sense of the texts. International students should use these informational operations since students who did not use this planned information management achieved less success. It seems that the planned information management should be considered as an instructional objective in English for Academic Purposes in their courses. The planned information management helps students to engage in different tasks that include studying for exams, working on exercises and preparing oral presentations. Talking about the plan, Newman (2001, 2002) thinks that it is a strategy of game

playing that helps students move information from a source like a text or lecture toward a target such as a test or a paper.

Johns (1997) has supported such a plan in outlining some activities on academic literacy through which students will be exposed to different kinds of texts in college. These genres will include test prompts to reading, the methods of research students should do to analyze texts, to interview “expert students” and the professors. These activities will help students understand the different types of text they encounter and deal with them in a more realistic way.

Because of the situated nature of academic literacy, international students should pay attention to the cross cultural differences between L1 and L2 settings. To this regard, they should contrast the values of the genres they encounter in their foreign institutions with those at their home institutions. International students should strive to understand the nature of academic literacy by mastering the processing of information to know what is needed and how to be able to do that.

The paper finally suggests different ways that institutions, administrators and instructors can help international students adjust to their new environment. In consideration of Norton (1995) it is essential that second language teachers help students claim the right to speak outside classroom situation. In order to achieve this goal, students’ experiences and social identities should be taken into account when designing language programs. In the previous section, I have retained some issues that international students are confronted with in their new environment such as the difficulty of finding access to the target language group, their attitudes toward the target language group, the way they process information from texts and paying attention to the cultural differences.

According to Norton, classroom-based social research is a collaborative effort undertaken by language learners in their local communities with guidance and support of the teacher. Learners engage in their communities to develop their oral and literacy skills by “collapsing the boundaries between their classrooms and their communities. According to Norton (1995) the classroom-based social research could help engage the social identities of students in a way that their language learning will be improved outside the classroom situation and helps them claim the right to speak. The classroom-based social research will help students have insights into how social interactions with the target language group are built. This should help teachers to understand how their students’ language achievement correlates with their investments in the target language.

Teachers should be cognizant of the fact learning patterns of students are different and some patterns fare better than others in the academic success of students in the U.S. Teachers should evaluate the learning patterns of their student population in order to know the dominant students learning patterns. According to Trigell et al., (1999) traditional teaching programs that are centered on teacher control and transfer of knowledge favor reproductive learning patterns of the students. Research has demonstrated that there is less enthusiasm for these types of teaching and learning environments. People rather extol the merit of teaching methods that encourage active, constructive and self regulated learning. Teachers can draw on such theoretical foundations to come up with teaching programs that are more process oriented in nature and that will require students to develop more meaning and application-directed learning patterns. These patterns will be of great help to students after their graduation as they will be engaged in lifelong and self directed learning.

Teachers should also encourage their students to attend the diversity programs on their campus in order to be familiar with a sense of appropriateness in the target culture. When students acquire knowledge of what is permissible in the target language, they can use words and expressions without the fear of being inappropriate or showing a lack of courtesy or politeness to their interlocutors. As a result of this, students will be more inclined to engage in social interactions with the ultimate goal of being part of the discourse community.

This paper outlines ways that international students can help themselves to acculturate in their new environment in the U.S. It also underscores the need for institutions and educators to create favorable conditions for this international-student adjustment. It is only under these conditions that more international students will strive to find the right mechanisms to expose themselves to the target-language group and become successful in both the social and academic areas of student life. If these conditions are met, there may well be an ineluctable promotion of successful learning on American campuses.

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