

Adult ESL Learners in Northfield:  
Marginalization and Success

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July 31, 2002

ABSTRACT

Based on interviews and field observation, this study examines English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in the city of Northfield, Minnesota. A wide range of conflicting feelings and cultural perspectives associated with language acquisition exists wherever non-native English learners come face to face with a dominant English culture. The interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic tensions produce positive and negative attitudes toward learning English. Students must confront issues that arise because of their own attitudes towards learning English and the attitudes of native speakers toward non-native learners. These factors influence the motivational orientations of second language learners and by so doing, their subsequent successes or failures in the language.

INTRODUCTION

There are many different and pressing reasons for Spanish-speaking immigrants to the United States to speak the "native", i.e., English, language. The question, then, is why more immigrants do not speak the language, or at least, do not speak it with an advanced level of proficiency. The impression of Spanish speakers towards English and English speakers has been called a love-hate relationship and is most commonly associated with North American speakers and the socioeconomic and political relationship between Mexico and the U.S. (Francis and Ryan, 1998, p. 25). This image and the imposition of the language on the Spanish speaker as an international lingua franca that he or she must possess to achieve professionally, academically, and economically creates a range of attitudes in Spanish speakers that may have a negative effect on language acquisition. However, as illustrated by the popular

quote, "North American children must be intelligent; they speak English from when they are little." indicates a more general attraction toward U.S. culture as a whole (Francis and Ryan, 1998, p. 26). Language attitudes are often contradictory, combining in a complex manner aspects of positive identification and rejection, "nationalistic consciousness," and self-depreciation.

This article explores the social and attitudinal factors inherent in the language acquisition of an adult ESL student. It focuses on the rural town of Northfield, Minnesota, and the experiences of students in different ESL classes, and is based on personal interviews with teachers and students alike. Ambivalent perspectives emerge in relation to integrative versus instrumental motivation in second language learning; the former is associated with positive and partially assimilative postures toward the second language, and the second with more utilitarian purposes and perspectives. This study examines whether sociocultural settings and instrumental goals in language affect secondary language acquisition in Northfield. Some limitations of this study include the time afforded, in that classes and students were followed for about two months.

The study topic was sparked by the author's personal interest in ESL programs and methods and two years of previous volunteer ESL tutoring. The town of Northfield is a natural setting for this study, with a dominant anglophone culture and significant Spanish- and Somalian- speaking subcultures.

In Northfield, the total population as determined by the U.S. census of 2000 is 17,147. Of this number, 15,324 claim to be white alone, and 16,165 claim to be not Hispanic or Latino. The Hispanic and Latino population (of any race) is 982, or 5.7% of the total. Of this, 767 are Mexican, 23 are Puerto Rican, 19 are Cuban, and 173 are "other", probably from South American countries. Of the total population 1,062 are foreign born, and 621 entered 1990 to March 2000. Of the foreign born, 302 are naturalized citizens (passing some English tests to obtain this categorization), and 760 are not citizens at all. Of the 1,062 foreign-born, 570 were born in Latin America.

When considering the category "language spoken at home," the census only counts the population that is 5 years and over, which is 16,290. Of this, 14,481 are English only speakers. 969, or 5.9% of the total, speak Spanish at home; and of these, 665 speak English less than "very well." That means, effectively, that of the 969 Spanish speakers who speak the language at home, 665, or 69%, speak English at a level of intermediate and below.

Some systematic poverty (and by this, marginalization) linked to ethnicity is shown by the initial reports of the 2000 census, but much of the relevant data to this study and comparative statistics will not be released until September of 2002. However, it is telling that of the 4,693 occupied housing units in

Northfield, 4,384 (93%) are occupied by householders who are white alone, while only 181 (4%) are Hispanic and Latino householders. Also, of the 181 Hispanic and Latino households, the population is 795, making an average household size of 4.39. Of the 4,497 white alone households, the population is 11,202, making the average household size only 2.49, an appreciable difference (2000 census, see bibliography).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In scientific, methodological, and linguistic studies a clear link has been shown between social factors and secondary language acquisition. Social factors are related to and include three components: orientations, motivations, and attitudes. There is some debate as to how these terms should be operationalized and defined and to what degree they affect the secondary language learning process. Despite this disagreement, there is consent that all three features play a considerable role. One influential study states, "Considerable research has demonstrated that achievement in a second language is related to measures of attitudes and motivation." (Gardner, Lalonde and Moorcroft, 1985, p. 207). The same research, which correlated students' attitudes and motivation to achievement with 25 new vocabulary words, also maintains, "Attitudes and motivation and language aptitude are important because they influence the rate at which second language material is learned." (Gardner et. al., 1985, p.225). Thus, negative orientations, motivations and attitudes may cripple learning a secondary language, or L2.

Gardner, the leading figure in the field of language acquisition theory, has defined orientation, motivation and attitude in several influential studies. For the sake of simplicity, this study will use his models of these three concepts, laid out in the next section.

Orientation refers to a class of reasons for learning a second language. Gardner also likens the concept to a goal. Orientation is separate although not dichotomous from motivation, and may or may not be related to aspects of a particular motivation. (Gardner, 1985, p 54). It can be likened to a person's initial motivation for studying a particular language.

Gardner's model divided orientation into two categories, integrative and instrumental. A learner with integrative orientations has positive attitudes towards the Target Language (TL) speakers, wants to identify more closely with the TL culture, and would like to assimilate into the TL community. A learner with instrumental orientations aims to learn the language for functional purposes, including a job or school.

Motivation may play a major role in second language learning, but disagreement arises, however, when we try to capture the essence of the

motivation construct. (Dornyei, 1994, p. 516) However, according again to Gardner, motivation consists of three different components, which include: the student's desire to learn the L2, the personal effort the student uses for learning the L2, and their attitudes toward learning the L2. Motivation concerns "those factors that energize behavior and give it direction." (Hilgard, 1979, p. 281) Attitudes, although included in motivation, also include the student's outlook towards the learning situation. Attitudes toward the learning situation could involve such things as the classroom or the TL environment and or culture. It is clear that orientations, motivation and attitudes can all affect the success of total language acquisition. Much literature and research has focused on the importance and differences between integrative and instrumental orientations in learning languages. The integrative orientation was originally favored as more successful than the instrumental orientation. Meng-Ching Ho, a scholar from the School of Education at the University of Durham, UK, writes, "Gardner and Santo found that students who learn English with an instrumental motivation are clearly more successful in developing proficiency in this language than those who do not adopt this motivation." (Ho, 1998). Some applied linguists still assume that students with integrative orientations were more genuinely interested in the language. Also, in "Motivation and Language Learning with Students of Chinese" Xiahong Wen (1997) found that most students choose to study Chinese because it is relevant to their own cultural background and because they are integratively interested in Chinese people and culture (p. 242). Integrative orientations receive a higher reputation for assisting students in successful language learning at the advanced level. However, both integrative and instrumental orientations are worthy and should be developed. Again Wen (1997) writes:

Later studies [after Gardner's original proposal of integrative and instrumental orientations] found that instrumental motivation was also an effective factor in L2 learning and integrative motivation may not necessarily be superior to instrumental motivation. Those who are integratively motivated, however, are probably more successful at an advanced language level than those who are not, mainly because psychological integration sustains interest in learning the language longer. (p. 235-236)

Recent linguists such as Dornyei have refined the definition of integrative and instrumental orientations. Working from Gardner's earlier studies, he clarifies that integrative and instrumental are not antagonistic counterparts, but rather are inherently interrelated. For example, a student merges both orientations when he has the goal of speaking English in order to "talk to the neighbors." His goal is basically functional – perhaps he would like to borrow the lawnmower – but also incorporates integrative skills, such as getting to know the neighbor's culture and its values for future inclusion in that social

group. There is no clear-cut dividing line between the integrative and instrumental orientations (Ho, 1998).

A study by Gardner, Lalonde, and Moorcroft, however, finds that the real practical difference in results produced by instrumental or integrative motivation bias is found in the long-term, not the short term. Short-term learners will be initially enthusiastic but will shortly fall behind, with the gap continuing to widen (p. 226).

Despite all the focus on integrative vs. instrumental, the fact remains that whatever the motivation, many immigrants do not have a choice about learning English. This fact, along with the attitude of English speakers toward non-native English speakers has an equal or greater effect on the learning process than the type of orientation. Francis and Ryan researched the prestige of the English language and the English student's motivation in Mexico. Their research suggests that students living in Mexico cannot have a positive motivation towards English Language Learning because they are the subordinate culture. One political science student in the study provides a striking example of how harsh the America-Mexico cultural tension is:

We are used to our neighbors, the gringos, and nobody likes them. In my department, it's very obvious. It's always those abusive imperialist Americans. All these things are always reflected in the class, and it is like going against the current when the teacher wants to include cultural aspects in class.... From my point of view, understanding the culture helps you a lot in understanding the language. I think that this is one of the problems that has made it difficult to introduce culture, specifically American culture, here (Francis and Ryan, 1998, p.31).

This attitude would seem to produce an instrumental motivation. However, with the social devaluation produced by living as a non-English speaker in a predominantly English-speaking society, comes the impulse for total inclusion. This results in a peculiar mix of instrumental and negative integrative orientations.

Francis and Ryan point out that negative cross-cultural tension will affect the interaction among the various motivational sets, in turn bearing upon the learner's "high" or "low" affective filter. (p. 28). Cross-cultural tension affects the learner's motivation and makes the students self-conscious about using English. Thus, the authors assert that when students feel socially devalued their motivations become overly ambitious and more likely to fail in long-term acquisition. (Francis and Ryan, 1998, p. 28) The student is likely to form unreasonable goals of complete mastery of perfect surface forms, resulting in very long periods of silence and a reluctance to practice and take risks, and an unwillingness to create original phrases with the language. These skills are essential to successful mastery of any second language. Researchers studying

processes of L2 acquisition (e.g. Swain 1985) argue that talk is part of the labor students must perform in order to learn an L2 (Olivo, 21).

The stigma associated with being an ESL student in a dominant English-speaking culture is considerable and affects language learning, resulting in marginalization. This boils down to uneven power relationships (Cummins, 1994); a failure by the population to recognize ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences (Kumbota, 1998); marginalization; and a lack of trust between speakers of different languages (Zanger, 1994). This attitude on both sides can significantly affect the success or failure of ESL students. In a study by Derwing, T., DeCorby, E., Ichikawa, J., and Jamieson, K., the authors found that students who had completed the ESL program in school (had succeeded) were much more likely to have had positive relationships with native English-speaking classmates, and also had more positive things to say about their native-English speaking peers in general. In Olivo, the author studies a school in central Toronto that has a majority of ESL students. He was able to conclude that students do indeed gain prestige related to their proficiency in English. Students claim power and status by initiated repair sequences. Students who were unable to perform in English were regarded with much less esteem (Olivo, 154-157).

## METHODOLOGY

The subjects used in this study were residents of Northfield in Minnesota. They were selected randomly from a pool of the available novice and advanced ESL students involved in two different ESL groups in the area. Although the purpose of the study was not only to examine Spanish-speaking students, lack of a Somalian or Korean translator made speaking with these students next to impossible, because at the current time no students of these backgrounds were at an advanced enough level in English studies to communicate on a practical level. There were more available students of Spanish-speaking backgrounds that were either able to communicate with me in Spanish or on an advanced enough level that English could be used.

Subjects prior to the interview were told briefly of the purpose of the study and assured of complete confidentiality, with results available upon request. Selections were made on a volunteer basis. In beginning research, there was an evident lack of enthusiasm and/or willingness to take part in the interviews until it was explained exactly what the topic of the study was and the short length of the interview. Most were eager to talk about their experiences once the nature of the study had been explained, and only one person refused to

talk to me at all, to the general amusement of other classmates.

Twenty-five individual interviews were used, and two focus groups of 6 and 9 individuals, respectively. The individual interviews were used to get a more in-depth perspective on the experiences of immigrants in Northfield. Originally the focus groups were a choice that was forced because of time and location constraints, but in some ways proved to be the more valuable of the two because of the levels of participation that were drawn out of the subjects because of the interactions and feedback from their peers. Data were recorded on tape during the interviews and later written up into field notes.

This study took place during small-group tutor time in two different beginning ESL classrooms in Northfield, Minnesota. One class, where roughly one-fourth (6) of the interviews were conducted, was a mixed group of beginning and advanced ESL students that met twice a week, Tues. and Thurs. from 6:30-9:30 p.m. They meet at the Advanced Learning Center in the Northfield Community Resource Center. This class meets only from September to June, with other summer programs intended to supplement the class during the summer.

The other class meets during the summer from June through September, and is divided into two different ability groups. Beginners meet from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and advanced from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. The majority of the interviews were taken from these two groups. Of the two focus groups that were conducted, one set of participants was drawn from the beginners and the other from the advanced students. No appreciable difference in results between the two groups was evinced.

Both ESL courses aim for proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing, yet both classes used very different methods for teaching the students. The winter class emphasized writing and grammar drills. The course syllabus was based on a standard ESL textbook that has units organized around themes (weather and clothing, activities and times of day, etc.), and it provides vocabulary and grammatical structures. At each tutor session, tutors are given a worksheet from the text. The worksheets contained grammar-centric written exercises such as, "Jose (like/likes ----- \_\_\_\_\_ flowers." I was free to use any method to help the students learn the material at hand. Additionally, the teacher encouraged me to change the coursework and work on any other appropriate material. The teacher himself did not understand hardly any Spanish, despite the fact that the majority of his students were Spanish-speaking, mostly from Mexico and other Central and South American Countries.

The class was held in a room in a single room in the NCRC. The atmosphere was inviting and modern, with a whiteboard and a small teaching aid of plants

and flowers that ran the length of the room. There was one central table that all the students gathered around. The teacher was approachable and friendly, and concerned about the real progress that his students were making.

The winter program is run by and initiated by the Community Action Center and the Dakota Prairie Adult Basic Education Program. It is funded through public taxes, schools, the community, and state aid. One central person that I spoke to at length with over the phone at the Community Action Center and several other people in the same office are in charge of movements to change or expand the program, and exercise strict control over who teaches, when the programs are offered, and what they teach.

The summer class was very different and had many more learners at higher levels of proficiency, for reasons that were unclear but can be speculated on. Students learn using both languages, English and Spanish. The teacher herself was very proficient, speaking about 50% English and 50% Spanish as needed to explain concepts. The class was grammar-centric but also clearly teacher-led, with grammar exercises brief and intended to supplement the presented material. There were also many spontaneous asides, further contributing to the learning in class. One explanation for these differences may be that the summer teacher had been a language teacher for Carleton, with a degree in ESL, Spanish, and French. The winter class's teacher had an educational degree.

The class was held in the basement of St. Dominic's church in Northfield, MN. It is funded mostly by the church itself and the Archdiocese of St. Paul, with some help provided by the Dakota County Adult Basic Education Program, such as use of their copy machine and teaching materials.

The summer classroom is not air-conditioned, despite intense heat several days that I visited. There are many windows, which help to give the room an open and inviting look. The walls are full of teaching materials that are an indeterminate mix of preschool and ESL instructional information, which some person at some time decided to write the word "GOD," at least once on every poster in large green marker. The classroom is structured with 5 or 6 long rectangular tables that face a small blackboard, with one table on the side facing another wall but close to the front of the room.

Data were obtained using a questionnaire that was designed to be open-ended so as to not limit their responses. The questions explore the orientations of the students, such as: Why do you want to learn English? (question #1). They delve into the student's motivations, such as: effort to use English outside of class, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward the English-speaking community. And, finally, the questions investigate the student's attitudes towards the learning situation outside of class.

All students took the questionnaire seriously, many seemed to enjoy giving

their viewpoint and opinions on the issues raised in the survey. Responses were generally long and tended to deviate slightly into other areas after long periods of time. Interviews generally took about 20-30 minutes apiece, depending on the respondent and also their familiarity with English or my level of comfort with their Spanish.

Data were analyzed by transcribing tape recordings from interviews and analyzing responses. Responses were sorted by identifying similar responses and looking at percentages of common responses and themes. The questionnaire that follows is the one given to all students; however, question #7 proved irrelevant or unmeasurable because of the response.

## STUDENT SURVEY

1. Why do you want to speak English? (work, children, respect, to understand, communicate, etc.)
2. How many times a week do you come to ESL class?
3. Do you listen to English outside of class?
4. Do you speak English outside of class?
5. Do you read and write in English outside of class?
6. In what situations do you use English? (at the store, children, work, friends, family, etc.)
7. How many times a week do you use English in any non-classroom situation?
8. Do you have any worries or doubts about speaking English in your community?
9. How do you feel when you use English around English speakers?
10. Have you received negative treatment in any experiences using English in the native-English speaking community?
11. Do you think you will be treated differently when you speak more fluently?
12. What social situations do you feel comfortable speaking English in?
13. Can you tell me about any positive experiences using English?
14. What would you most like to learn in ESL class?

## RESULTS

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire evaluated social factors in the students' English learning environment. Not surprisingly, almost all respondents reported having some negative experiences with English. All reported feelings of cross-cultural tension. Most feel marginalized and intimidated using English in the native English community and many also freely volunteered that such an atmosphere made learning English more difficult.

Of 25 interviews, the results follow:

1. Why do you want to speak English?

to work - 22 (88%)  
children - 08 (32%)  
more respect - 17 (68%)  
to understand - 24 (96%)  
to communicate - 25 (100%)

2. How many times a week do you come to class?

Winter - average of 1.9 (offered 2)  
Summer - average of 3.6 (offered 4)

3. Do you listen to English outside of class?

yes - 25 (100%)

4. Do you speak English outside of class?

yes - 22 (88%)  
no - 3 (12%)

5. Do you read and write English outside of class?

yes - 25 (100%)

6. In what situations do you use English?

store - 17 (68%)  
children - 16 (64%)  
work - 12 (48%)  
friends - 14 (56%)  
family - 8 (32%)

7. How many times a week do you use English in a non-classroom situation?

answers vary wildly, unanswerable because of frequency of use

8. Do you have any worries or doubts about speaking English in your community?



The same questionnaire was administered to the Focus Groups as was administered to the individual subjects. The results were typical and corresponded closely to the responses provided in the individual interviews. However, more information, anecdotes, and valuable tangents were produced from the groups. There was more discussion without the formal and perhaps intimidating setting of the one-on-one interview. Each session ended up being around 40 minutes in length, a little longer for the beginner's group (probably because of some difficulties and slowness inherent in translation and communication).

As in the individual interviews, the main reason that the learners wanted to speak English was to be more involved and aware. Work was a universal reason to learn English; even if English was not required for the job that they presently had, it would be advantageous for them both personally and economically to learn English. The beginners felt most strongly about this issue, with many hoping to find a better job when they had a more solid grasp on the language. Also, many of the mothers and fathers were very concerned with their children's education. Most of the children knew English to at least some extent, but parents were unable to be as involved with aspects of their children's education, something that they perceived as being very valuable. However, the general consensus was that it was "almost impossible" not to know English in this culture.

Despite the attendance results that showed that some students did not make it to class at times, all of the interviewees were definitive that they went to class "as much as possible." However, although the groups seemed less interested in the reasons why they might not be able to make it to class, in both discussions work arose as one possible reason why they might not be able to make it.

Everyone had learned about the class from friends and word of mouth. The original way that it had been announced, as told to me by the teacher, was from the pulpit of the church that the class was held in. She also is the founder and director of the Hispanic choir in the church, and indicated to me that many of her students were in the choir and had been told about it there, but the choir was not mentioned at all except in the beginner's group, and there only briefly. There are also printed advertisements that can be found in some local area apartments, but those were not mentioned either, and it seems unlikely that the sign would have attracted many people, since it was entirely in advanced English.

When I asked the advanced group how many times they listened to and spoke English outside of class, general laughter broke out. It seems I had asked a rather silly question. When I inquired as to what was amusing, the reply was, "all the time, every day!" One of the more outspoken respondents wisecracked

with, “rather you should ask us how often we speak Spanish!” However, I didn’t get a chance to ask this question as the discussion rapidly segued into how this constant speaking of English is difficult for the respondents in several ways. The subjects generally felt forced to speak English, and this was spoken of with some resentment. However, this was contradicted somewhat by the next tangent that discussed the value of reading newspapers in English. Some reading is by choice; some is not, such as for work.

In Northfield, “everything is English.” Spanish is spoken only with friends and family, and even then English is used for various reasons such as practice and to make non-Spanish speakers understand. One of the respondents described to me some problems he had had recently trying to have a doctor examine him for some foot pains that he had had. Another respondent related how he had tried to get his brakes fixed the other week.

English is viewed as something not only highly valuable but essential. Some worries that the ESL students had was that they resented the fact that this was so and wished for more Spanish-speaking shopkeepers, or at least more people who were able to speak the language. The question of whether the students had any worries or doubts about speaking English in the community was unclear to most at the outset.

When the learners tried to speak English around English speakers, their responses quickly made it clear that this was a major emotional point with the overwhelming majority. When I asked how the students felt about speaking English around English speakers in the advanced class, students immediately glanced around at each other for consensus, and then a spokesperson for the group immediately and with some emphasis (and humor), said, “terrible.” They feel very self-conscious about their lack of English skills and that people are impatient and “think that they’re speaking wrong.” They emphasized that this was very discouraging at times. “Nobody helps you, is patient, except here in class.” English speakers don’t respect the students’ positions as learners. This makes everyday situations very difficult all of the time. One of the coping strategies that was discussed was the method of the students’ to write words out onto a piece of paper, since English speakers tend to ask things to be repeated several times. However, it was emphasized that this was only when starting out, and that it tends to make them feel very uncomfortable and it was of less status to have to do this.

The overwhelming consensus of the respondents was that people think that just because they don’t understand English very well they are stupid. The second point raised at this time by the advanced group was that immigrants are treated especially badly by the police. However, this topic appeared to cause some discomfort and was quickly dropped, except by the two children present, who appeared to want to talk about a recent experience involving one of their

immediate neighbors. However, the parent cut them off, telling them to be quiet. A phrase that came up in both of the groups was the expression, apparently common, “if you don’t speak it (English), move it.” This was pertaining to the prevalent attitude of native English speakers toward English learners. They stated that in Mexico, no one would ever treat them as people do here. When I asked if they thought that things would change once they were more proficient, the answer was that they hoped so. One anecdote told to me by a man in the beginner’s group was of his experience the day before of trying to buy pig’s feet (?) at the grocery store. Apparently the cashier tried to say the item in question was \$5 when really they were \$3. The respondent called him on it and the cashier changed the price without comment.

The only situations where learners felt comfortable speaking English was with friends. Strangers are almost always an uncomfortable situation. The main times that learners had had any positive experiences with using English was when they had struggled through the situation to do something really worthwhile, such as at their children’s school speaking to teachers, or communicating effectively with supervisors on the job.

The things that learners would most like to focus on remained communication in speaking. However, “everything matters.” Although I did not specify any choices in the focus groups, the conversation both times brought up the three topics of reading, writing, and speaking. These were all spoken of as goals to be worked hard at.

## Attendance

Attendance may be a reflection of the student's motivational desire to succeed in class, and therefore the English language. However, in the Northfield ESL class understanding the mental, social, and work conditions of American immigrants explains the wide range of class attendance. Following is a chart of the summer Northfield attendance record, as provided by the teacher. The attendance is variable, but there is not a high turn over rate of individual students. There are 23 students registered for the beginner's class and 15 for the advanced. Data were not available for the winter classes.

Attendance records are not a valid judge of motivation in this classroom. The students miss class for many reasons and because of circumstances not under their control. The students may miss class because their primary workplace has an evening shift and because the students (most without driver's licenses) do not always have transportation. According to my interviews with the two teachers of the ESL summer and winter programs, it is not uncommon for even the most dedicated students to miss a few days of class. Although the summer classes do not seem to have as much of a problem with transportation as the

winter (perhaps because of their more central location in the town) there are many other considerations that the teacher mentioned that had been brought up by her students. For instance, a primary problem in earlier years had been lack of childcare during the classes. The problem was solved by the incorporation of a nursery in the room next door where children of younger ages could play safely and be monitored. However, the primary consideration and obstacle to continued attendance is work schedules. Different programs try to offer classes at different times in the day to make ESL more accessible to learners, but the sheer amount of hours that most immigrants work also presents a barrier to attendance. There are many considerations besides lack of motivation that come into play when looking at attendance rates.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Immigrants are a unique group of language learners. Unlike other language students (college, etc.) immigrants have seldom initiated their study of the English language because of cultural interest. Although they did choose to relocate to the United States, learning the English language is merely a consequence of their move into a new culture. They are immersed in an English-speaking environment, and they have daily opportunities to hear and practice English. Social tension and negative attitudes from the native English speakers, who have little tolerance for foreign speakers, can in turn lower the student's attitudes about the English speaking community. One consequence of such a learning environment is that it will inhibit the student's acquisition of language. The results of my case study affirm the presence of negative attitudes between target culture and the ESL students in the study.

The link discussed between social factors (orientations, motivations, and attitudes) and L2 learning would show that secondary language learners in the atmosphere of Northfield have many obstacles to overcome in their pursuit of long-term mastery of the English language.

Most of the students that I discussed in this report had orientations that were more instrumental than integrative, when connected with learning the language. Yet there was a great attraction to popular culture and a wish for inclusion that was demonstrated by my respondents, especially evinced in an individual response to the question, Do you think that you will be treated differently when you speak more fluently? "I hope so."

ESL students in Northfield seem to sense and to intuitively act on their non-official status as subordinates in a native-English speaking culture. This leads to resentment and hostility towards English speakers.

. As a white, female, native-English speaking college student I was quite the exception to the rule in the environments that I drew my respondents from. To gain access and to validate my presence in the class, in the course of this

project I tutored the same classes I was interviewing. While that may have fostered some good relationships among several key respondents, the fact that I was there as a (presumably) sympathetic tutor may have altered or biased their results to my questions to some degree. In several discussions remarks were stated that I “was there to help.” That, along with the division in the students’ minds as to the levels of help expected in and out of class leads me to believe that my presence did affect answers. Although I cannot accurately guess as to in what direction, I suspect that there is more hostility toward native English speakers than was explicitly indicated in interviews.

However, all students seem to have, whether instrumental or integrative, a high and strong desire to learn English, which may offset somewhat the effects of the negative learning environment. A typical orientation, “I want to learn how to speak like an American.” Does display both instrumental and integrative purposes. Additionally, high motivational intensity is shown by the respondent’s high rates of speaking English out of the classroom and by the high rate of attendance for ESL classes. Also, the extremely high rates of responses indicating the goal of learning to communicate with native speakers shows an integrative orientation.

An idea for further research would be to measure the rates of English learning over a longer period of time and compare that to the attitudes of respondents. This would provide a definitive measure of integrative and instrumental orientations at work in the Northfield community. Some consideration would have to be taken in considering how long each subject had already been in the country or had had schooling in English.

If Northfield as a city would like to make a positive impact on their community and also serve the needs of its non-English speaking community, a greater effort must be made for education – not only of ESL but of awareness of the native-English speaking community towards its English speakers. As of now, the need for ESL classes themselves as evinced by demand has been filled by city initiatives. There are several classes available that cater to the needs of ESL students, all for free and most within city limits. However, if Northfield would like to make that effort realize its full potential, there must be action on both sides of the community. One idea that was repeatedly mentioned was that of translators in various places. According to my students, there is too much demand and what is provided isn’t enough.

One other way to increase the effectiveness of ESL classes by decreasing negative cultural bias would be an expanded volunteer tutor program. As I tutored my students, I realized that the tutoring was not helping so much to improve their English skills as to improve their impressions of native English-speakers as a whole. It can be a great cultural influence that can increase students’ integrative outlooks and thereby improve students’ motivations and

attitudes.

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