

5-2016

A Study That Critically Engages Secondary Language Acquisition And How It Relates To Immigrants Developing Cultural Competence

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A Study That Critically Engages Secondary Language Acquisition And
How It Relates To Immigrants Developing Cultural Competence

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MAY 2016

A Masters Paper

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,
Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in the department of International Development,
Community and Environment

And accepted on the recommendation of

David Bell, Ed.D. Chief Instructor

ABSTRACT

A Study That Critically Engages Secondary Language Acquisition And How It Relates To Immigrants Developing Cultural Competence

Susan A. Nelson

This study seeks to critically engage in the topic of secondary language acquisition to explore the role it plays in immigration, particularly as this relates to developing cultural competence. Further, the research examines the barriers to second language acquisition, and also makes recommendations for reducing those barriers. This will be done by examining literature that analyzes the role that secondary language learning plays in immigrants becoming culturally competent within the United States, and will look at this more in depth by focusing on Mexican immigrants who have come to the United States.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Professor David Bell for his endless patience with me, the stories and inspiration along the way, Professor Nigel Brissett, my friends for their support and my mother.

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Introduction

A Study That Critically Engages Secondary Language Acquisition And How It Relates To Immigrants Developing Cultural Competence

“A different language is a different vision of life.”

– Federico Fellini, Italian film director

Every year around 400,000 Mexican immigrants cross the US/Mexican border seeking a better life in the United States. This is a significant number of immigrants from a single country and it accounts for more than half the number immigrants that enter the United States annually’ legally and illegally. Each year these immigrants struggle to find ways to immigrate, seek asylum and gain pathways to legal citizenship. Generally, this translates into having a higher income and livelihoods to support themselves and their families, and often including remittances to immediate and extended families in Mexico. By seeking the ideal of a better life in the United States through either legal or illegal immigration, it has created a variety of issues for both governments, countries and populations, and individuals. One of the main issues with this is the United States government lacks policies that are easy to understand for ICE police in order to enforce and follow in regards to immigration. This ranges from confusion by immigration officials and ICE police about how to treat minors, youth and adults who are immigrating or emigrating to the United States from Mexico to how to enforce border patrol policy in a humane way. By not having clear regulations, policies and rules in place on how immigration should be enforced, it makes it difficult for the United States

immigration department, policy makers, government officials, communities that have large populations of immigrants and for immigrants.

This study seeks to critically engage in the topic of secondary language acquisition to explore the role it plays in immigration and assimilation, particularly as this relates to developing cultural competence. Further, the research examines the barriers to second language acquisition, and also makes recommendations for reducing those barriers. This will be done by examining literature that analyzes the role that secondary language learning plays in immigrants becoming culturally competent within the United States, and will look at this more in depth by focusing on Mexican immigrants who have come to the United States. According to several studies done by various institutes such as the Migration Institute and Pew, present statistics from the United States Census, and historical evidence, Mexicans are the largest immigrant group within the United States. I have therefore chosen to focus on and critically analyze this group of immigrants that come as they are the most widely researched. being the largest immigrant group, and therefore offer the most data to draw upon. The historical and political context focusing on immigration, will be briefly included in my study to more fully elucidate the connections between the United States and Mexico.

The term *immigrant* is defined and used in this paper as a person who has moved to the United States by choice from somewhere else, such as Mexico, who intends to settle in the United States for a long period of time. The important part to recognize in defining an immigrant is that the person has a choice. An immigrant should

not be confused with a refugee or asylum seeker. Refugees and Asylum seekers do not have a choice when they are leaving their countries.

Cultural competence is used in this paper to characterize an immigrant who has developed advanced listening skills in the secondary language, who feels at ease in the adopted social environment and is able to communicate and be understood lucidly in the target language. This definition comes from a wide array of ideas that were compiled by the National Center for Cultural to describe how it can be understood over time Competence (NCCC). This center compiled several of these ideas that are connected to cultural competence and how it can be understood from a variety of perspectives.

There are many reasons that cultural competence is essential for immigrants to be able to successfully transition into the USA. This study seeks to analyze concrete examples of secondary language acquisition as the most valuable element in becoming culturally competent. Related aspects that will be investigated will be the economic situations that Mexican immigrants come from and how this affects their immigration journey, understanding how an immigrants prior educational level affects them, examining the policies that shape immigration in the United States, theoretical frameworks that evaluate the importance of secondary language learning in creating cultural competence and how being competent in the target language affects the establishment of a strong culturally competent multicultural community.

Secondary language acquisition and cultural competence are important to the development of a multicultural society, understanding various definitions of

multiculturalism and promoting diversity. Mallozzi and Malloy (2007) look at how secondary language and multiculturalism are tied within academic settings in various global locations through different language learners who are referred to as correspondents. Their case studies assess how different cultures view multiculturalism in relation to secondary language acquisition and how it is then tied to cultural competence. An example of this is how foreign language is taught in Chile. They suggest that although the language learner or student, feels there are updates needed for the teaching materials used in classes their perspective provides insight into how the Chilean government is teaching second languages, their values, and shaping student's minds in how other cultures should be viewed. This illustrates that by learning another language, the students have increased access to valuing another culture, to being more receptive to diversity and to becoming more aware of differences. Along with the idea of a multicultural society comes differences in how citizenship is interpreted.

Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul (2008) explain that from a western perspective there are four main ways to be recognized as a citizen. To them to be a citizen in a country means to have a legal status and be able to participate in politics, rights, and have a sense of belonging to the country. Immigrants who don't possess the necessary secondary language skills, such as English, are excluded from essential ideas tied to citizenship in the places they immigrate to and face challenges in becoming included within the society. Crossing borders legally or illegally, and choosing to stay in another country due to various reasons, often means that the immigrant must acquire

a secondary language to legally become a citizen in that country and become culturally competent in order to settle into their new community.

The theory of globalization will be implemented through out the paper to critically analyze the questions and ideas raised within this paper because of its intersectional nature in regards to the topics presented. Globalization can be defined in several ways. Within in this study it will be understood from the perspective of Suarez-Orozco, who outlines different ways to understand it depending upon the audience. These differences of understanding globalization will be applied to the different parts of the study to create a deeper understanding of the issues and ideas expressed. Later on globalization will be discussed in a more detailed in this study to provide a stronger understanding, connection, comparison and examination of the multiple ways that are linked to the questions being asked in this study.

Brief Immigration and Policy History Between the United States and Mexico

“Immigration policy shapes immigration patterns, which in turn have a tremendous impact on the demography, culture, economy and politics of a state.” (E. Meyers 2011)

To better understand the history and context of how immigration with Mexican immigrants coming to the United States, it is valuable to examine past migration patterns, the policies in the United States and the economic context that have influenced the current immigration trends. Exploring past immigration trends of Mexican immigrants coming to the United States is important in painting a realistic picture of how current policies that are in place are addressing issues both current and past. Policy

and immigration trends will be examined to provide a clearer understanding of how essential immigration policy reform is in relation to understanding the connection between secondary language acquisition and cultural competence.

Mexicans have been immigrating to the United States for a long time, for reasons such as employment, to seek a better life, education, or to be closer to family that has already emigrated to the United States. These reasons are called push and pull factors. Often immigrants from Mexico are “pushed” to the United States due to economic stressors and pulled back home when they are done working for a short period of time. Distinctive time frames that this study will examine regarding immigration trends are before WWII, after WWII and the present. These time frames are significant as they impacted immigration policy differently. Each time frame indicates different factors that affected push and pull factors such as economics, politics and social climate regarding immigration of Mexicans to the United States.

According to reports by the Migration Policy Institute, migration of Mexican immigrants has gone through stages. The first stage occurred before World War II, where large numbers of Mexicans came to the United States as seasonal workers in the agriculture sector during the summer months, then would leave in the winter. This pattern continued up until after World War II. During this time frame there was some backlash that affected many immigrants from Europe and Asia. This didn't affect Mexican workers until later on in the late 1920s. Due to the great depression there wasn't as much work for migration workers. This caused the Mexican population to

drop around 40% during this time frame according to data collected by the Department of Homeland Security for the US Census.

The next phase started in 1942 when workers for the agricultural sector were needed. This led the United States to set up a formal guest worker agreement with Mexico known as the Bracero Agreement. This agreement gave Mexicans who worked on farms a minimum wage, housing that was guaranteed, transportation and health benefits. This was overseen until 1953 by the United States and Mexican consuls. Following this the Eisenhower administration decided to not have the consuls in charge of this program, and changed the contracts to benefit the growers in the United States. At this time the government decided to enforce a deportation campaign of unauthorized Mexicans, that was called “operation wetback”. Around 4.8 million contracts were in place after this and were originally used to assist in agricultural sector. In 1964 the Kennedy administration decided to get rid of this agreement because of a coalition of worker advocates. This contract greatly assisted the United States, yet created issues within Mexican communities. Entire Mexican communities became dependent on immigration to the United States and working in the agriculture sector as their main source of employment. This type of semi-seasonal migration became essential in the social and economic make up of these communities. This immigration of seasonal agricultural workers became an expectation within these communities.

After this agreement was no longer in use beginning in 1965, immigration reform that changed pathways for immigrants to come to the United States. It started

with the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) which outlines the basics of the United States immigration law that is in place currently. It got rid of the 1924 law that used race based national origins system and decided to instead issue visas per a country of up to 20,000 visas per year. A seven tier system was put into place by the United States government for rationing visas in the country of origin that favored applicants with families rather than single immigrants trying to come to the United States. This immigration reform was a terrible system for Mexican immigrant workers, because it didn't allow large numbers of seasonal workers to come to the United States to seek work. This new immigration system didn't take into account how immigration reform would affect the economies of the the United States and Mexico economies. Due to these reforms, and limitations illegal immigration of Mexicans coming to the United States became a huge issue. At one point it became so problematic that congress held 25 days of hearings that looked at the illegal immigration problem in the late 1970s.

Using the theory of globalization from the viewpoint of an economist and looking at the interconnected nature of the economic market the United States shares with Mexico, I have made a few assumptions. One is that I think this issue of so many workers coming to the United States from Mexico during this time stemmed from a dependency from the Mexican immigrants who needed the income from working seasonal jobs within the agricultural sector in the United States to provide remittances to their families in Mexico. Although there was a dependency within the agricultural sector in the United States too, as they needed inexpensive laborers to work their fields.

This co-dependency for inexpensive labor from the United States agricultural sector and seasonal immigrant workers from Mexico who depended on these jobs to be available. From my perspective this encouraged and led to the following changes in policy later on that allowed workers to come to the United States.

Starting in 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) came into place. This act provided pathways for illegal immigrants and unauthorized farm workers who had entered the United States before 1982 to gain citizenship. Border control was given extra funding to assist in securing the border region and provided more penalties for employers who hired illegal immigrants. In 1990 this act allowed for more worker visas to be authorized. Later on in 1996 the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act allowed for more border control and visas to be issued. During the 2000s more immigration reform took place. Bilateral discussions regarding immigration reform were done by President George W. Bush of the United States and the Mexican President Vicente Fox, which were sadly cut short due to the terrorist attacks in New York City. However later on between 2002-2006 more immigration reforms occurred that focused on more border enforcement, visa reform and administration. Although these changes were useful for border management, they didn't produce significant changes in maintaining the border region. During this time the rate of illegal immigration increased the undocumented population of Mexicans and Central American in the United States. The reason that more immigrants from Mexico were coming illegally to the United States, is that many of them couldn't obtain visas to be in

the United States legally due to regulations that were put into place by the new policies that were in place by the Bush administration (McCabe 2010). Mexicans during this time frame accounted for about 60% of all illegal immigrants in the United States (McCabe 2010).

During 2008 Barack Obama became president of the United States, and took on the heavy burden of immigration reform that had been left behind by the Clinton and Bush administrations. This task of trying to find a balance between what law makers want for immigrants and the needs of the people has been extremely difficult. The past administrations allowed an uninterrupted flow of immigrants from Mexico coming into the United States, that in turn created a higher percentage of immigrants in the United States that were both legal and illegal to be dealt with. Areas that President Obama tried working towards creating policies that would help families and assist more immigrants in being able to stay longer in the United States in order to work toward becoming legal citizens.

President Obama decided during 2014 that he would announce an executive action known as the “*Immigration Accountability Executive Action*”. This reform allows for temporary “relief from deportation” for families and children who are in the United States but do not have legal status. There are two parts of this reform, one is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the other is Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA). Benefits of DACA are numerous for young immigrants, and it promotes opportunities for them to become citizens. By creating this reform, and

having it put into place immigrants would be able to get access to more jobs, be able to set up a bank account, obtain a legal drivers license, and gain access to better healthcare. DAPA helps support parents of Americans, and allows them the ability to defer their deportation and work towards legal status in the United States.

This expanded programming is estimated to affect around 5 million people according to the Immigration Policy Organization. Deferred Action reforms support even more opportunities for young immigrants. Economically in the United States this reform would allow more workers to be authorized to gain access to better employment. In turn this would positively affect the economy in the United States. Projections on how this would affect the United States estimated that by granting more immigrants a legal status that there would be around 28,800 jobs created over the next ten years. This in turn would affect the gross domestic product by around \$230 billion. (American Council on Immigration) Although this policy was unable to go into full effect, immigrants who applied and were granted this status in 2012 are able to benefit, but not with the additional reforms that President Obama presented. This is due to the state governments of 26 states that filed a temporary injunction that has halted the expansion of DAPA and DACA legislation from going into effect until this case is resolved. Currently this legislation is not able to go into effect and is awaiting to be dealt with in the court system. Reforms like DAPA and DACA are important to examine in relation to the main question of this study because without secondary language skills, it is very difficult for immigrants to gain access to the services that would allow them to become

culturally competent and integrate into American society.

The DREAM Act is the other immigration policy that has received a lot of attention during the presidency of Obama. It was first introduced in 2001, and has had a controversial reception since then. The reason that the DREAM act was not well received was due to the fact that the Republican party held the majority in the government from 2001-2009 under George W. Bush. Historically the Republican party has not been as supportive of immigration reform. After his presidency ended Barack Obama came into the White house as a Democrat. The Democratic party has often been more supportive of immigrants and more open to working on reforming policies regarding immigration in the United States.

The DREAM Act has been reintroduced several times beginning in 2001 through 2014. This act is an acronym for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors that is part of a multi-phase process for illegal immigrants to obtain first conditional residency. After meeting these conditions minors that are a part of this program would be eligible for permanent legal residency in the United States. There are several conditions that are laid out in this act, for example, the person must provide proof that they entered the United States before age 16 and lived in country for 5 years, graduated from a United States high school or obtained a GED, have what is deemed a good moral character and pass criminal background checks. Once these conditions can be met the government will then grant permanent residency to these minors. Other requirements for permanent residency can be met by attending a higher education

institution or served in the United States military for 2 years and if discharged it must be honorably, pass additional background checks and continue to demonstrate good moral character.

This particular act is important to the discussion of cultural competence and secondary language acquisition because so many of these requirements under the DREAM ACT are directly dependent on English literacy. More specifically, a deep familiarity with the English language is a prerequisite to attaining higher education and serving in the military. Similarly, English language literacy will likely provide a better understanding of the various US laws and the nuances surrounding them, thus helping to maintain a clean criminal record. Further, while the term “good moral character” is quite vague, it is not unreasonable to assume that this means attaining a level of cultural, political and social integration that facilitates behavior that is consistent with what is expected in the context of “American traditions.” Much of this nuanced understanding of these values and traditions is more easily acquired by having access to the dominant language spoken in the US – English. Therefore, without being able to speak English it is difficult to obtain legal permanent resident status.

Educational Struggles Tied to Secondary Language Acquisition

Past and current policy that is tied to immigration is not focused on the issues that are important in creating a strong integration program into the United States, but look more at the economic issues tied to immigration. Policy makers are more focused on the economic advancement of the United States, adhering to social ideas tied to poor

immigrant policies and controlling the amount of immigrants allowed into the United States.

By examining the connected nature of immigration policies that are present in the United States, and needs of immigrants who are immigrating to the United States it allows for a stronger case to be built around the need for creating policies that are more diverse and developing more versatile programs that acknowledge these differences in how they treat different immigrants who come to the United States. This type of data and information enables policy makers, educators and communities to critically analyze what types of barriers immigrants from Mexico face and understand the needs they have in order to become culturally competent in order to integrate into society that make up the United States.

The DREAM Act aims to promote higher education however it doesn't provide pathways to gaining access to educational routes to aid immigrants to obtain language skills or create culturally aware programming. Immigrant policies need to acknowledge the connection of education to cultural competence. In order to change this mentality, more policy makers, legislators and lobbyists need to make a point to acknowledge the research that points to the importance of creating language programs that are adequately funded and accessible for immigrants. Doing this would allow policies and programs to be better informed in providing for immigrants and improving integration success.

Studies completed by the Pew Hispanic Center (2010,2011,2014) demonstrate that Mexican immigrants that arrive in the United States at a younger age are more

likely to be able to speak English fluently than those that are older. Mexican immigrants that are aged 18-25 are less likely to speak English as fluently as younger children. According to one study, approximately 17% of Mexican immigrants that are aged 18-25 are not able to speak English as well when compared to other Latin American immigrants. Also noted in this age group, Latin Americans who have immigrated have a higher likelihood of acquiring college degrees before coming to the United States compared to Mexican immigrants. A majority of Mexican immigrants who come to the United States do not have opportunities to pursue higher education or even the ability to finish high school due to financial needs of their families. This is important to recognize in connection to learning English as a secondary language as immigrants who already have acquired a college degree are shown to be able to learn a second language a quicker pace than those who have not. Having a higher educational degree or technical skills are useful too; however, this offers very little value if the immigrant cannot effectively communicate. The ability to comprehend English is another barrier that Mexican immigrants face within this age group and it becomes a significant issue in being able to find meaningful employment. Without a basic understanding of the English language, it is difficult for immigrants to communicate and obtain access to health care, better housing, educational services, and career assistance for jobs that pay a living wage.

There are differing ways in which Mexican immigrants learn English depending upon several factors such as the path that they took to come to the United States, legally

or illegally, and their past educational level. Other things that influence secondary language acquisition for Mexican immigrants is whether or not they plan to immigrate long term, seek out citizenship and overall what their future plans are for remaining in the United States. The immigrants that are being analyzed in this study are aged 18-25, generally entering the United State illegally to work for periods of 6 months at a time, have lived in the United States for sometime and lack basic English skills or have decided recently to immigrate to the United States in order to make a better living and send remittances to their families in Mexico. English language is critically important for Mexicans in this age group especially, because these particular immigrants are more likely to seek pathways to citizenship in the United States. In order to acquire citizenship, immigrants must be able to speak and understand a certain degree of English. Data from places such as the Migration and Policy institute or the Pew Hispanic Center illustrates how important these programs are to Mexican immigrants and where these services need to be located.

It is important to acknowledge the differing levels of literacy between generations in relation to their English language competence. Mexican immigrants that are younger, such as children or second generation, compared to older generations have varying degrees of literacy. Many times even second generation Mexicans struggle with English. This is due to Spanish being the primary language used to communicate in their homes.

Barriers

“English proficiency is a virtual requirement for full participation in US society. Americans also view English language use as a key component of national identity.” (Jiménez 2011)

Being able to communicate in English is considered to be the most important skill an immigrant can have or obtain when they have decided to immigrate into the United States. Barriers to being to becoming culturally competent are tied greatly to the ability to acquire English as a secondary language. From a globalized perspective the job market in the United State is more accessible for Mexican workers who speak English as a second language, making it a vital skill for them to transition successfully. Socially, the culture in the United States is a primarily English speaking country.

By not being able to speak English competently it is very difficult for an immigrant to succeed. An example of this can be seen in how difficult every day activities are to complete when immigrants are unable to understand how to read a bus schedule or communicate their needs to a school administrator for their children. Employment without having a basic comprehension in English is almost non-existent as employers must have workers that are able to comprehend directions in order to be successful at their jobs.

An important study funded by the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Vulnerable Portfolio* and completed in 2006 by *Lake Snell Perry Mermin/Decision Research (LSPM/DR)* involved the formation of a focus group study that concentrated

on the social factors impacting immigrant and refugee communities in the United States. The 2004-2005 study was conducted in ten different cities, using data from 32 focus groups, and is the basis of the report “*Living in America: Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Refugees*”. Their report discusses the importance of acquiring English language skills and how language in turn helps mediate other challenging issues that cause stress for immigrants and refugees. The inability to communicate can be a barrier to expressing health concerns at the clinics or hospitals, communicating student needs with teachers or school administrators, accessing suitable housing, seeking mental health care services, and finding adequate employment all of which could largely be solved by providing accessible secondary language acquisition programs and services for immigrants or refugees that come to the United States.

There are various avenues for learning English in the United States including government programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, private lessons, English classes in community centers, and schools that specialize in English language teaching. It is valuable to examine various teaching platforms, methods and institutions for secondary language acquisition in order to be able to make assumptions when comparing and contrasting them. By doing this it is easier to link and understand how these programs should be informing policy makers, legislators and general society. The type of instruction that is being used for teaching immigrants English is important to examine when evaluating the secondary language success rate for adult students as different teaching methods have varying results depending on the age group, culture and

gender of the immigrant or refugee. The effectiveness of the teaching method, and ultimate success of the student, is dependent on how the teachers are certified, the curriculum, the medium of teaching, accessibility, course placement, and methodologies being utilized by the teachers to instruct the students.

An affordable option is to utilize the online platform that is available via the United States government website (welcometousa.gov). This site provides access to a variety of different ways to learn English as a second language through interactive portals, finding classes in your community, accessing a library that can assist in English language training and provides links to citizenship classes. While it is a useful website, as they incorporate media, language and technology, these programs are really only accessible if the immigrant has the ability to get access to a computer with internet on a regular basis and has a basic level of comprehension of English as the website is not in organized in Spanish. Additionally, this resource assists limited English speaking immigrants by helping them find legal assistance.

In larger communities and cities with higher rates of immigrant populations there are usually more community classes available. Researchers and studies show that these community-driven classes are often taught by volunteers that are willing to donate their time with these organizations because they will assist immigrants directly in their community. Through this, community members are supporting immigrants who are often trying to learn English to enable them to get a better job, improve English literacy and work on career development. However, there are many unmet immigrant needs

such as adequate facilities, qualified volunteers, and materials in many of these programs. These needs are not fulfilled due to the lack of state or federal budgets that don't recognize these needs and in turn actually discourage Mexican immigrants from attending classes. Often times these courses are widely sought after initially because they are the most affordable option, but are discovered later to be the least accessible because of poorly scheduled class times, in locations that are not accessible by public transit, and do not offer childcare programs that many Mexican immigrants desperately need in order to focus on learning. Non-profit programs are another learning opportunity that typically receives funding from government organizations and private donors, often working with immigrants to offer English language programs that will better fit their needs. Issues with these types of programs, though, are they are often stressed due to funding, space limitations, and inadequate training.

Another pathway for Mexican immigrants that is not often utilized in acquiring secondary language instruction is seeking out courses at state universities, private universities and community colleges. These institutions generally offer multiple programs for immigrants including English language courses, career development, skills based learning opportunities and classes for newly arrived immigrants to learn about acquiring citizenship. These courses are generally offered at the community college or university level are many times not as accessible because of class timing, cost and many immigrants simply not knowing that these types of programs are available. Private language instruction is often limited to immigrants who have family networks

supporting them financially or already have the means to pay for this type of instruction. Often private lessons are utilized by highly trained immigrants who have completed higher education courses, and have the financial means to pay for these courses, as they are often costly. The reason that immigrants often don't know about these programs or utilize them, from my understanding when analyzing information from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation studies is, immigrants are not being given the resources on the programs from places where they go for information, the cost of attending is not affordable and logistically it appears that these programs are not accessible for them.

Bleakly and Aimee Chin (2010) focus on areas such as age of arrival, English proficiency and Social Assimilation; are important in critically analyzing and understanding at what age immigrants have the highest likelihood in being able to successfully acquire secondary language proficiency. Their study looks at how language is linked to being more culturally competent and how likely a higher success rate of integration could be. To support their theories, the authors use in-depth research that employs psychological studies that view the development of the brain in connection to language learning, statistics that look at which citizens from specific countries who possess a predisposition to be able to learn English easier, and data that focuses on different age groups of arrivals to better understand their work. Additionally, this data that they have collected and analyzed, is used to predict fertility, geographical location of the immigrants and marital status of immigrants. Most importantly, though is it

connects to this particular topic of barriers that immigrants and refugees face. It links a direct correlation of how critical secondary language learning is for immigrants from all backgrounds and how different age groups have a variety of needs in regards to learning assistance. The importance of understanding these differences when creating secondary language programs for immigrants is important to recognize as they have different needs based upon when they arrive in the United States at differing stages of life.

By examining the connected nature of immigration policies, demographics, education, and needs of immigrants who are immigrating to the United States, it allows for a stronger case to be built around the need for creating policies that are more diverse and developing more versatile programs that acknowledge these differences in how they treat different immigrants who come to the United States. The United States is becoming more globalized within its society and therefore needs to acknowledge the fact that more people are coming who need access to secondary language assistance. The workforce is changing from a native English speaker to those whose second language is English. Data and information that provides information on the growing immigrant population and their needs enables policy makers, educators and communities with growing immigrant populations to critically analyze what types of barriers immigrants from Mexico face. Then it is easier for these stakeholders and institutions to understand the needs Mexican immigrants have in order to become culturally competent in order to integrate into society that make up the United States.

Institutes such as the Pew Research Hispanic Center and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have completed studies to aid policy makers, local governments, state leaders and communities in helping them understand the important role that secondary language acquisition in the development of cultural competence of Mexican immigrants specifically. Their studies look at areas such as level of English that is used within the home, at work and in their peer groups in relation to how these different spaces directly correlate to how successful these immigrants are able to integrate into their communities. More importantly the data that is collected looks specifically at these groups of Mexicans that are different based on age, geographic regions, education level and English language ability. Policy makers, legislatures and leaders within the government can use this information produced by researchers and non-governmental organizations to understand the needs for secondary language acquisition programming that is urgently needed to influence the way that they shape policies that will contribute to better integration and immigration reforms for Mexicans coming to the United States.

By using data from sources, such as those mentioned above, that measure English language, demographics and educational backgrounds in Mexican immigrants it can for example, assist in several ways such as how to shape language programs, culturally sensitive management and aid in building cultural competence. Thus creating secondary language programs that are more accessible and understand the needs of Mexican immigrants in a particular age group, should lead more accessible programs.

By accessing secondary language acquisition programs Mexican immigrants are more likely to access a wider array of basic services that are offered in the United States. When immigrants are able to speak English, they are empowered to become a member of their communities and advocate for their needs too. When immigrants learn English skills they are more adept to integrate easier into their American neighborhoods, and have a sense of belonging when they can communicate with their neighbors. This sense of belonging and being able to voice their needs with others allows for better integration to take place within communities across the United States. Being able to be an active member in their community, workplace and society enhances their ability to become culturally competent. It is very difficult for many immigrants, not just Mexicans to feel comfortable, have a sense of community and safety if they are unable to communicate.

Globalization and Secondary Language Acquisition

“Globalization is the general backdrop for understanding of the new immigration.”

(348 Orozco)

Mexican immigrants struggle with a wide array of barriers and educational issues that make it difficult for them to acquire secondary language skills that would make it easier for them to become culturally competent in the United States. By comparing, contrasting and looking at different studies that touch upon these issues, it is clear that the importance secondary language acquisition is imperative to being able to successfully integrate into the United States. To understand the reasons that

secondary language acquisition is important to successful immigration into the United States for Mexican immigrants this study will draw upon the theoretical framework of globalization. Globalization as discussed throughout the paper will be looked at more in depth in order to understand, connect, compare and deeply examine the various facets of this that are linked to the questions being asked in this paper. Globalization was chosen to critically analyze the questions and ideas raised within this paper because of its intersectional nature in regards to the topics presented. It is important to note that globalization has both strengths and weaknesses in acknowledging the connections to secondary language acquisition and immigration in successful integration into the United States.

Orozco (2001) focuses on how globalization is connected to immigration within the scope of economics, society, and culture. The author highlights within his paper the importance of understanding immigrant children as they are the next generation and to recognize the struggles that they face to integrate into another culture. Lastly the article provides some thought provoking questions that are focused on the field of education, language and psychology that are tied to globalization. According to Orozco's article he uses a three ways to look understand globalization, however this study will only be using two to analyze the issues presented. The first is to understand it as a broad term used to describe a variety of different phenomenon. Then secondly it can a term that explains a process of change that generates at once a centrifugal force that result in the *"deterritorialization of important economic, social and cultural practices from their*

traditional moorings in the nation state” (Orozco 347). These types of ideas expressed by the author are the push factors for these types of immigrants from Mexico that are choosing to uproot their lives and immigrate to the United States, rather than to continue living in Mexico. The author uses different perspectives from the scholarship from disciplines such as economics and anthropology to illustrate how globalization can be seen to influence a variety of realms that affect people all over the world.

From an Economists, standpoint the author uses the view of globalization that can be understood through the lenses of an economists as a means to encourage the international financial institutions, the flow of goods in the market place, and the interconnected nature of the global community. This can be understood in this study as a way to influence policy changes, such as those mentioned earlier in the chapter touching on a brief immigration and policy history between the United States and Mexico. In this particular chapter immigration policy began to change as the workforce became more globalized between the United States and Mexico.

Whereas Anthropologists view of globalization is different than an economists according Orozco, as they link these changes and adaptations to ideas that concentrate on cultural identity, language and society. According to Orozco, the Anthropologist view point has encouraged the emergence of “*studying immigration, transnationalism, cultural hybrids, duality, and cultural conflicts*” (Orozco 347). The changes to society, language and identity in relation to learning English as a secondary language is important to understand. In the chapter focusing on barriers it looks at the various ways

that are available for immigrants to learn English as a second language. By providing a pathway that is accessible for immigrants to learn English as a second language, it allows them to become a part of American society. Additionally, this can be seen in how the DREAM act functions in assisting minors in gaining citizenship in the United States. Being able to speak English allows for immigrants to become engaged in American society, shape their identity in a different way and allows the American society become more multicultural.

Global policy in how it influences the economy, society and cultural fabrics is important in relation to the theory of globalization. Governments have to be aware of how they construct the legislation within their countries, and how these laws affect the people. Immigration laws are an important part of this discussion, as globalization encourages them to seek out the best economic situation that they can attain, however the policies and laws can hinder their freedom of movement. Studies that have been done in the United States by institutes such as the Migration Policy Institute or Pew Research Hispanic Center, have shown how valuable and necessary immigration is to economic development. This data is often shown at conferences that are nationally held such as the “National Immigration Integration Conference” put on by organizations such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, National Partnership of New Americans, New York Immigration Coalition, and the New York City Mayor’s office that deals specifically with immigrant rights and several other nationally acclaimed institutions. By presenting this type of information on national

immigration platforms it allows practitioners, policy makers and non-profit organizations to give more valid information that can influence legislation in the United States in creating positive change for immigrants.

Immigrating to the United States for most Mexicans is an economic decision, as they are paid more money in the United States than they are paid in Mexico. This has to do with economic differences, educational access, and geographical location. Mexican immigrants are choosing to enter the United State either legally or illegally in order to gain access to greater amount of resources that they feel they need to succeed in the global market economy. In his article Orozco uses a graph that depicts the percentage of immigrants from around the world that come to the United States seeking economic advancement and what level of education the different regions have. It can be seen in this article that there are stark differences in Latin America and Central America in comparison to other regions in their educational attainment. This means that immigrants from these areas need even more assistance when they arrive to the United States in obtaining the necessary skills such as secondary language acquisition in order to be successful. For example workers that come from Mexico, according to this study, are generally employed in low paying jobs within the construction, hospitality and other low skill jobs in the United States. This type of work puts Mexican immigrants at a high risk of being treated poorly (poorly in terms of long hours, low pay, being taken advantage of etc.) at work in order to make enough money to survive. This translates

often to having limited access to housing and not having the skills necessary to communicate their needs.

In order to gain access economic opportunities that are tied to globalization and successfully have access to them immigrants must be able to communicate by becoming competent in English which in turn would assist them in successfully integrating competently into the culture of the United States. Integration through secondary language acquisition is the key for immigrants to be members of society in the United States. Without secondary language acquisition many immigrants will be unsuccessful in being able to access a living wage, obtain safe housing, medical care and educational resources. Secondary language acquisition is a key component to this because in order to make a successful transition into the United States immigrants, Mexican or otherwise, must be able to access the resources around them to transition. Education, language and success are the key areas that Orozco touches on within his article making a strong case for secondary language as being a necessary building block for success in integration.

Recommendations

Through analyzing the policies, educational institutions, barriers, the historical context and using the theory of globalization as way to look at the role of secondary language acquisition it is clear from my perspective that successful cultural competence and immigration within the United States can only occur if they are interconnected. The reason that these areas need to be collaborating is that they all influence different parts

of secondary language acquisition in successfully creating cultural competence amongst Mexican immigrants in the United States.

For example, without policy makers taking into consideration the barriers that Mexican immigrants face in accessing secondary language acquisition education institutions, it is difficult for them to make policies that will be useful in addressing this issue. By working collaboratively with different programs that aide in secondary language acquisition, educational institutions and non profits that provide these services, policy makers would be able to in theory create more impactful positive changes. Mexican immigrants who are able to able to acquire English are more likely statistically to be able to integrate culturally in the United States, have higher incomes and contribute more to the United States economy. Having language skills enables immigrants to be able to pursue long term goals within careers, build a stronger community and nation together with citizens who are native to the United States.

The data from places such as the Pew Hispanic Center and Migration Policy Institute, suggests that there are issues with providing adequate secondary language learning programs, facilities and funding. Special attention needs to be given to the different needs of different communities and the ages that utilize these services too. Throughout the research in barriers and education, the studies suggest that there is not enough accessibility to these programs and funding is lacking. By putting these issues to bed it would create a stronger foundation and relationship with immigrants who are coming to the United States to integrate. Integrating immigrants that possess the

necessary language skills are more likely, according to studies, to succeed economically and feel a deeper connection to their home.

These changes need to be implemented in order for the United States to have a successful immigration program, and to better assist immigrants who plan to work towards legal citizenship. Aiding immigrants in gaining legal citizenship would greatly impact the economic interests in the United States because studies have shown that immigrants create more jobs on average. This leads to more tax revenues for the government, an improved job market and more diverse base entrepreneurs in the business field. Immigrants bring linguistic diversity, cultural flexibility and a drive to succeed to the American economy.

Not implementing changes to the current secondary language programs and promoting cultural competence amongst immigrants will only hurt the United States. Without significant changes, the government will lose a large amount of workers who help provide a lot of labor that is difficult to obtain elsewhere, cause issues in promoting multiculturalism, hurt the economy and cause issues within communities due to misunderstandings.

To prevent this from happening policies, laws, bills and acts need to be created that are well thought out in order to provide the best immigration framework for immigrants to follow. The DREAM act needs to be implemented though out the United States, as it will give thousands of immigrants the opportunity to obtain higher education, that will eventually lead to helping the American economy become more

diverse and stable. Additionally, it will bring in more revenue, as the programs are supported by money that is used for the application fees. By giving immigrants the opportunity to gain higher education and giving them the resources to succeed the United States government would have the most diverse and well educated workforce available.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) needs to be implemented too. There are thousands of immigrants who are living in fear, legal limbo and poverty. Families that are immigrants are being torn apart due to multiple designations based upon the various visa programs, and experiencing mental trauma due to stress caused by these inefficient policies that could be avoided. Without visa designation programs that assist immigrants such as DAPA or DACA, it is difficult for these immigrants to function and be active members in American society. Additionally, it causes more issues for law enforcement, ICE and the justice system due to unclear laws regarding immigration. The legal system doesn't benefit from having ineffective policies or laws on immigration.

Funding for Secondary language facilities should be a priority in all the states, especially in states where their large immigrant communities, in order to promote and provide easier access to language classes. Classes at these facilities need to be more logistically and financially accessible as this was a huge issue for many immigrants according to studies done by *Robert John Foundation's* focus groups. By doing this it

would accomplish the goal of integration into the United States at a quicker pace. Legislators, policy makers, and governments need to emphasize the importance of learning a second language because it aids in creating a stronger foundation for the United States to grow from and sets a stronger global stance on how to provide better immigration frameworks. Taking these recommendations into consideration would greatly aid in promoting a stronger secondary language acquisition program in the United States and would enable cultural competence and immigration to take place more successfully.

Conclusions

The United States is one of the leading countries globally where immigrants emigrate too. On average the number of Mexican immigrants is around 400,000 per a year, and is showing signs of increasing. Mexicans who immigrate or emigrate to the United States make up the largest immigrant populations overall. Other immigrant groups such as those from South East Asia and Central America are among the growing emigrate populations coming to the United States too. When they arrive to the United States though they face a treacherous and dysfunctional bureaucratic immigration system. The policies, programs, laws and assistance that immigrants receive in the United States is confusing because it is not functional. This is due to years of immigration policy that has failed in acknowledging the immigration system and fixing the issues within it. Its taken years for this problem to evolve and get to the huge problem it is today.

According to research presented in this study the data, studies and information presented shows there needs to be more done to assist immigrants in being successful in accessing services that are geared towards their secondary language acquisition. It is brought up several times within this paper that more policy makers, legislators, policy makers, governments and communities need to come together to find the best ways to provide secondary language acquisition programs in English in order to promote better immigration policies, structures and integration programs. Communities involvement needs to be encouraged and multiculturalism embraced rather than cast down upon. In order for long term successful integration to occur immigrants need to feel like they are welcomed into new places that they emigrate to and feel like they belong.

Being able to speak English is the most important place to start in creating a stronger immigration and integration system according to several studies that were looked at within this review. Providing secondary language acquisition courses have to be implemented that fit the needs of a variety of ages, backgrounds, locations and incomes should be a cornerstone in the immigration program to promote higher levels of cultural competence. The government needs to recognize the important research and findings done in the field that speak to the importance that language has in the development of immigrant livelihoods and successful integration. Additionally, governments need to realize that providing this type of assistance, the government would be able to reap higher yields economically too, because they would have a higher educated workforce, additional businesses and more tax revenue. Integration into

communities would take place at a more successful rate, as citizens and immigrants would be able to communicate amongst themselves. Secondary language acquisition is plays a significant role in creating successful cultural competence and immigration in the United States. Not having strong policies that support immigration, integration and secondary language acquisition is huge issue for the United States that needs to be given serious attention and resolved.

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