In Natural Context: Acculturation, Attitudes, Motivation and English Language Proficiency among Adult Migrants in Newcastle

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Defining Attitudes

An attitude is an evaluative disposition toward some object

Intentions

Behaviours

Attitude

Cognitions

Affective responses

(Zimbardo & Leippe 1991)
Defining Motivation

“Motivation is the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained”.

Pintrich and Schunk (1998:4)
Our Research Questions

- Is the Australian social context powerful enough to override ethnic differences in the way migrants perceive Anglo-Australians?

- Do language attitudes change with length of residency?

- Do language attitudes and motivation predict the level of English language proficiency?
## Theoretical Framework

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Concept</strong></td>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>Integrativeness</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prediction</strong></td>
<td>Learners will acquire the language only to the degree they acculturate</td>
<td>To achieve native-like proficiency learners have to identify with the TL group</td>
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<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Natural/Non-instructed SLA</td>
<td>Academic/ Instructed SLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondents</strong></td>
<td>Same ethnic background</td>
<td>Students</td>
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*School of Language and Media*  
*November, 2003*
Respondents

- 123 (81 female and 42 male)
- 48 non-English-speaking countries
- Adult (over 18 years of age, $M=43$ $SD=12$)
- Permanent residents or Australian citizens
- Residing in Newcastle
- Average age at immigration 29 years (7 to 54)
- Average length of residency 14 years (2 weeks to 52 years)
Respondents’ Characteristics

- **Immigration category:** 55% family, 22% skill and 13% refugee

- **Qualifications:** 16% postgraduate, 28% tertiary, 11% diploma, 18% senior high, 19% junior high, 7% primary and 2% no formal schooling

- **Employment:** 30% professional, 25% other occupations, 12% student, 19% housewife, 8% retired and 7% unemployed
Procedure

- Two-and-half-hour semi structured interview or
- A self-administered questionnaire
- Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (12-point scale) was used to measure English language proficiency
- 25-page, 329-item questionnaire with 50 main questions and 217 Likert-type scale items
Constructs of Interest

Respondent’s Characteristics
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Migration category
- Age at immigration
- Language instruction before arrival
- Education
- Age
- Gender
- Length of residency
- Year of arrival

Motivation
- Use of strategies
- Effort
- Attitudes toward English
- Motivational orientation
- Beliefs about language
- Attitudes toward the language instructor

Acculturation
- Australian adaptation
- Social distance
- Social contact
- Attitudes toward:
  - Self
  - Australians
  - People in native country

English Language Proficiency
- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing

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Some Results on the Attitude Measures

Mean of positivity ratings across 28 personality traits (Scale 1 to 5)

- **Self**: 4.2
- **Ideal Self**: 5.0
- **People in Native Country**: 3.8
- **Australians**: 3.6
Positivity ratings on which Australians were rated significantly higher (Scale 1 to 5)

- Self-confident
- Honest
- Open-minded
- Positive
Positivity ratings on which Australians were rated significantly lower (Scale 1 to 5)

- Hard-working
- Presentable
- Clever and smart
- Hospitable

Positivity ratings

- People in native country
- Australians
The Australian Context
Some Preliminary ANOVA Results

- No difference in attitudes toward Anglo-Australians as a function of region of origin or length of residency
- Significant differences in the perception of the ‘Self’ and the ‘People in Native country’
- North-East Asian participants most likely to suffer marginalisation in the Australian (Novocastrian) context
Attitude Change with Length of Residency

Groups by Years of Residency

Positivity Ratings

- 'Self'
- People in Native Country'
- Australians'

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Use of Strategies, Effort & Length of Residency

Groups by Years of Residency

- Use of Strategies
- Effort

Mean Score

- through 1
- 2 to 5
- 6 to 15
- 16 & more
Correlates of Proficiency

Positive:

- Contact with Australians
- Confidence with English
- Time Spent on Reading
- Length of Residency (S & L)
- Australian Adaptation (S & L)
Correlates of Proficiency

Negative:

• Age at Immigration
• Effort
• Use of Reading Strategies
• Attitudes to the Language Instructor
• Attitudes to People in Native Country (W)
The Power of the Situation
(Conclusions)

- Positiveness
- Duality
- Implications for English Language Proficiency