

# Exploring English as a Second Language Acquisition in Multicultural Contexts

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## ABSTRACT

Culture refers to the beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviours, experiences, religious practices, social status and material possessions common to a given group of individuals within the society. Multiculturalism can be defined as a combination of different cultures in the world. Exposure to the multicultural concepts of language learning means that students and learners can comprehend the differences and similarities in the different cultures and traditions, which can assist them to learn the language better. Learning a second language is never a smooth and fun process and an individual must make a long-term effort to learn to master it. The relationship between language acquisition and multiculturalism is highlighted in this analysis. It states that learning language is more significant when learners are introduced to the various cultural orientations. This exposure expands their knowledge on the communication styles, social behaviour and cultural values of the target language. There is also tolerance, openness and mutual respect among learners in different backgrounds as a result of multicultural classrooms. Moreover, they provide the opportunities to participate actively, discuss and interact, which are important to enhance language skills. As such, multiculturalism can be a helpful tool in making the acquisition of the second language more effective, inclusive, and enriching.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, Second Language, Acquisition, Tradition, Culture

Learning a language is a cogitate process which makes the learners to mould and develop their personalities. Language and culture are interknitted. If you want to learn (or) know about a language thoroughly, you will start learning other cultures too. By learning other cultures one could know the cultural traditions, customs, values, rituals, attitudes and the ways of thinking, feeling and their action. When we want to learn a language it is very important to know the parenthood (or) origin of the language. The origin of the language depends on the cultural traits because culture and language are inseparable. English is an international language which is treated as the first language by 400 million people around the world and 700 million people treated it as the second language. When we want to know about the English language we automatically learn English peoples' (British) culture too. For instance, marriage, kin groups, etiquette, religion of British people.

The social and cultural aspects of marriage among British people have changed a lot over the years and have made a marriage a complex and diverse life. Modern lifestyle, personal decisions and evolving social values have been slowly breaking the traditional concepts about marriage. All relationships and cohabiting before marriage are now popular aspects of modern British society although these practices are

frequently blamed by people who hold on to traditional family values and religious vision. These changes mark the transition of marriage to an institutionally and life-long commitment towards a more adaptable and individualistic one founded upon mutual understanding, compatibility, and personal liberty. Although the pattern of marriage is becoming more and more complex, the family ties in Britain are also relatively strong and significant. Family relations and emotional bonds have been highly valued and most individuals are still in touch with their relatives despite the changing marital patterns. As statistical reports state, close to 70 percent of adults think that people are supposed to be in touch with their close relatives, but almost 80 percent of them believe that their family relations are more valuable than friendship. These results imply that despite the changing nature of the institution of marriage, the role of family in the British social life continues to be at the centre of the life. Marital and family attitudes however usually differ with age, sex, and education and social status. Age-old people are usually more inclined to appreciate traditional marriage and might not approve divorce, cohabitation, or delayed marriage. On the contrary, younger individuals tend to embrace alternative types of relationships such as live-in relationships, single parenthood, and same sex marriage. Marital roles may also be perceived differently by women and men depending on gender as women tend to have a perception and interpretation of marriage based on career, domestic roles and independence. Moreover, the rising divorce and remarriage has further complicated the British marriage life. The family composition in modern Britain has changed in many ways, with families consisting of step-parents, step-siblings and blended families. All these changes have been brought about by economic pressures, career ambitions, urbanization, and evolving gender roles. Moreover, the civil partnership and same sex marriages have been legally recognized, and this has expanded the

concept of marriage and family to the extent that the British society has been made more inclusive and diverse. Therefore, marriage in Britain might seem to be a complex process given the changing social norms and patterns of relationships, yet it still remains a significant factor in personal identity, emotional security, and family relationships. Marriage has not vanished, it has just had to adjust itself to the needs of contemporary society, both as a continuation and a transformation of British culture.

Interpersonal interaction in kin groups can be extremely complicated and at some point it can be characterized by tension, misunderstanding or conflict. The conflict of opinion, the generations, economical concerns, and individual expectations may cause tension between the family members. Nevertheless, despite these strains, the kinship relationships still have great emotional and social importance in the life of people. To most people, family has been one of the biggest sources of identity, support and belonging. The majority of them view themselves as a part of a greater family system and still have close connections to their family members. The feeling of responsibility, love, and history together usually sustains such relationships even in instances of disagreements. Kin groups offer both emotional solace in times of crisis and practical support in daily life, as well as a feeling of continuity between generations. Consequently, most people consider family relations to be more significant as compared to the relation of friends or other social groupings. In most societies, the scope of kinship does not just end with parents and children but it also goes up to grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and in-laws who also play a role in the makeup of the family unit. These associations assist in supporting cultural practices, social norms and shared duties. So, despite the fact that the kinship ties can be filled with tension in some cases, they will always be one of the strongest and most valuable constituents of the social life.

The United Kingdom is a densely populated country. People prefer to be diffident in public. They prefer to ignore the strangers by defending their private spaces and gardens. People of United Kingdom love to behave politely in general.

The British people are generally uninterested in formal religious practice. 60 percent of adults do not believe in God. 10 percent of people believe in Roman Catholic Church. 30 percent of people believe and identify themselves in Church of England. 4 percent of people believe in Presbyterianism.

In the process of acquisition of language, one has the opportunity to know much about the culture of a country and it is evident that both language and culture exist like dawn and dusk, bread and butter and it is impossible to separate language and culture. One can hardly learn any skill without the help and assistance of teachers, and this holds true particularly when it comes to language learning. Teachers are an essential part of the English language classroom, as they are not only the teachers of grammar and vocabulary but also the teachers of communication, cultural knowledge, and world awareness. With the acquisition of English as a second language, the task of the teacher goes beyond the textbook and the classroom. The teacher who is broad-minded and culturally sensitive assists students to relate what they learn in the classroom with the real world. In the multicultural approach to language teaching, the teacher should use a way that promotes the learners to learn about local and global cultures. When teachers are reluctant to bring into the classroom other cultures, the students would not be exposed to social and communicative worlds in which English is practiced. Being closely related to the culture, when it comes to speaking English, it is important to comprehend the cultural background of the English-speaking communities in order to communicate properly. As an example, when educators present the elements of the United Kingdom culture, including religion, customs,

etiquette, traditions, and social behaviour, learners will have a better insight into the role of language in real-life contexts. This helps learners to read meanings more correctly and apply English more suitably in various situations. Various cultures have different values, beliefs, practices and folkways. Through this exposure of students to these cultural differences, teachers can make them open, tolerant and curious towards other lifestyles. This kind of exposure helps the learners engage in discussions in the classroom, express their own cultural experiences, and talk more confidently.

Comparing and analyzing different cultures, students start to realize that language is not only a system of words and rules but also a form of expression of cultural meanings. This understanding enhances the learning process and makes learning the language more natural, interactive, and effective. What is more, multicultural instruction encourages inclusive and student-centered classrooms. When educators incorporate cultural content in the form of stories, festivals, traditions, social practices, idioms and the expressions people use in their daily lives of various English-speaking communities, they open the door to authentic learning. Students get more involved as they perceive language as an active and dynamic way of communication and not as an academic subject. This expands their thought and communicative skills, increases their intercultural competence, and improves their overall language proficiency. As a global language, English is spoken in many countries and communities, each having its cultural peculiarities and styles of communication. English is a common second language in India and is an important language in education, work and international communication. Thus, to prepare students to become more effective and confident communicators, it becomes the crucial task of teachers to provide them with the cultures of English-speaking people. This does not imply teaching one culture against the other

but instead, it is about aiding students to embrace cultural diversity as well as learning to appreciate their cultural identity. Therefore, educators play a leading role in the impartation of multiculturalism in the learning of English language. They play a significant role in promoting intercultural awareness, communicative competence, and valuable learning. Through the application of multicultural approaches in language instruction, educators are able to make the learning of the English language more pertinent, inclusive and effective in the globalized world.

The teachers are the key component of second language teaching since they are the ones who create the very learning process and direct the students on the road to successful language learning. Teachers should always examine the learning processes, language backgrounds and the school experiences of the students before learning to teach English as a second language. Given that learners have different social, geographical and education backgrounds, a standardized mode of teaching might not be equally helpful to them. Thus, it is required to learn about the diverse learning styles of students as the first step towards ensuring successful language acquisition of English. The way English is learned is highly dependent on the difference in educational approaches in various states in India and these differences have a strong impact on the way students are taught English. Students tend to attend schools with English as a medium of instruction, and English is taught at a young age in most of the urban centers. Consequently, these learners tend to become more familiar and confident in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. Conversely, in most rural schools, students are likely to continue their education in their region-language schools where mother tongue or local language is the primary language of instruction. In these learners, English is normally taught as a second language and not as a language of communication in the classroom setting.

Therefore, the ways and speed of learning English among learners in India differs immensely.

Students with regional language background might experience difficulties in pronunciation, fluency, sentence structure, and written language particularly when they are not exposed to English in the outside world. In the southern region of India, say, Tamil is a major medium of instruction to a great number of students. These students are second language learners of English and might not feel very comfortable speaking or writing in English. This however does not mean that they are less able or less intelligent than students in urban English-medium institutions. Instead, it is a matter of exposure, practice and learning environment. When given the right pedagogical help, all students would be able to become good users of the English language. The methods of learning taught by teachers must be learner-focused and activity-based in order to decrease the level of fear in students and promote engagement. Role play, storytelling, group discussion, dialogue practice, picture description, and incident narration are communication-oriented strategies that may be employed to enhance confidence and communicative competence of students considerably. These strategies establish a natural and interactive environment where students would be able to use English in a meaningful way as opposed to memorizing rules.

Moreover, simple vocabulary, teaching in context, interaction, use of audiovisual resources, and constant reinforcement may be used to overcome the rural/urban disparity in learning. Therefore, learning English by students is highly influenced by their learning and exposure as well as their education background. By acknowledging these differences and teachings in accordance, it is possible to include English learning, make it effective, and accessible. Students are able to break their language barrier and can slowly learn to speak English as a second language when teachers

are aware of the needs of the various students and use the appropriate techniques. Each student comes into the classroom with a different back story that is influenced by race, tradition, culture, hopes, beliefs, emotions, and personal experiences. Every learner is unique, has his or her talents, and has his or her own way of perceiving the world. When it comes to English language acquisition, it is important to take into consideration this difference, as students do not acquire knowledge in a similar way and at the same pace. Their cultural and emotional history makes them react to language, communication with others and involvement in classroom activities. It is therefore the significant role of the teacher to discover, develop and realise the concealed talents of students and this can be achieved through knowing their own nature. A good and understanding teacher does not see the classroom as a homogenized space, but as a living community of different learners. Accommodating the individuality of students, teachers may help to make the learning process more inclusive and encouraging, so that all learners feel respected and valued. This is especially crucial in the language classrooms, where confidence, expression and participation are the key to the learning process.

As a teacher enters the classroom, he or she must come with him or her with the colour of the world by introducing the students to various cultures, traditions and lifestyles. This is the major role of language teachers, compared to many teachers of other subjects, as language and culture are always intertwined. English teachers, especially, are advised to expose students to as many cultural attitudes as possible in order that learners may have the opportunity to learn how language operates in various societies and various communicative contexts. Through such exposure, the students will have a wider view and will be able to associate English with real life situations other than viewing it as a subject to be learned. Classroom participation can also be an effective tool of the students because of

their exceptional character. Once teachers appeal to various cultural background, experience and talents of children, learners will be more willing to exchange ideas, give opinions and have a meaningful dialog. Such activities as storytelling, role play, cultural presentation, group interaction, and experience sharing enable students to share what they have to say in their own backgrounds thus making the classroom more interactive and learner-centered. This not only enhances attendance but also self-confidence and communicative ability. One of the key aspects to be highlighted is that the idea of teaching various cultures in the classroom will help the students to be aware of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding.

Students are made open-minded and more interested in using English as a means of communication as they learn about various customs, beliefs, values and lifestyles. In such a manner, multicultural instruction will develop a bridge between personal identity of students and the world of English language use. It finally opens the way to more efficient and significant learning of English. Therefore, students in their uniqueness are not a problem but an asset in the language classroom. By understanding and leveraging student diversity, teachers can foster a multicultural environment that is rich, promotes participation, personal growth, and effective acquisition of the English language.

Multiculturalism has been found to be very important in language acquisition especially in learning English as a second language as it provides more inclusive and wider learning environment. Among the most significant distinctive aspects of multiculturalism is the fact that it opens the way to the knowledge of many cultures, traditions, and social practices of people all around the world. Through exposure to other cultures, students eventually come to accept diversity and learn to embrace the co-existence of diverse beliefs, values and ways of life. Meanwhile, multiculturalism is also associated with the acceptance of unity

in that, people are taught that, although there are differences in cultures, people can co-exist and live together when they understand and respect each other. It also enhances the principles of integrity, tolerance, and inclusiveness, which are critical to meaningful communication in a global society. The other important characteristic of multiculturalism in language acquisition is that it not only makes students respect the culture and traditions of other people, but also it makes them conscious of the ethnicity and social realities of other groups. This awareness will make the learners more open and sensitive in their communication.

Multicultural exposure in the language classroom facilitates the learning of the language in an easier and more efficient way since the student starts to realize that language has a close relationship with culture, context and human interaction. Consequently, learners understand meanings, expressions, idioms and communication patterns much better in real life situations. This process is highly beneficial to the speaking and writing skills because students feel confident because of the process of active participation, cultural discussions, storytelling, role play and collaborative learning tasks. Besides, multicultural approaches are more effective to teach English since it is a universal language that is spoken by representatives of other countries, ethnicities, and cultures. The multicultural classroom will raise awareness of the English communication in real life and practical contexts so that students can view English not only as an academic discipline but as a living practice of cross-cultural communication. It fosters listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills because it stimulates the learners to compare cultural manifestations, interpret other perspectives, and apply language in socially appropriate situations.

Moreover, multiculturalism alleviates fear and reluctance among the learners, fosters self-confidence and encourages them to engage in the classroom dialogue. It also

enhances intercultural competence, critical thinking, empathy, and adaptability, which is crucial in the acquisition of language in the contemporary world. Therefore, the typical elements of multiculturalism, including cultural awareness, tolerance to diversity and unity, attachment to tradition, ethnicity awareness, communicative confidence, intercultural sensitivity, etc. are all useful in achieving more meaningful, more engaging, and effective English language acquisition. Through this, multiculturalism is not only a social but also a strong pedagogical tool that enhances teaching and learning of English.

Multicultural classroom building is a critical and efficient undertaking in learning the English language particularly in multilingual and culturally diverse communities. Not only does a multicultural learning environment allow students to learn the difference in cultures, traditions, and values, but it also provides meaningful opportunities to the students to build linguistic competence through interaction, participation, and cultural awareness. As language and culture go hand in hand, the teaching of English is more efficient when it is backed with multicultural views that allow the learners to tie language to the real life social and cultural settings. Teachers are at the heart and core of this process. They are not only teachers of language, but also of culture, who can initiate students into the variety of the world and help them to see the differences with openness and respect. By using culturally responsive teaching practices, educators can remove hesitations, develop confidence, and engage students in classroom learning. After determining the special skills, experiences, and approaches to learning of students, teachers can establish non-discriminatory environments where all learners will feel special and encouraged to learn the English language more efficiently. In such a nation as India, where English is the second language, the teacher plays even a greater role. Rural and regional language students might not find it easy to speak, write, and comprehend

English because of their exposure level and diverse learning conditions.

Nevertheless, with the hard work and efforts of the teachers even such learners can be provided with access to English and it can be made manageable. Coupling the cultural knowledge with communication-based activities, the teachers will be able to make English a lot easier to learn and make it more valuable, practical, and interesting. Moreover, cultural contents in the teaching of English language have lasting effects on the minds of students. Not only does it enhance their language proficiency but also expands their worldview, enriches their intercultural competence, and equips them to operate comfortably in a globalized society. When the learners get to know more about various cultures in the process of learning English, they start to see the language not merely as an academic subject, but as a strong tool of communication, knowledge and social interaction. English is a second language in India; however, over the years the number of students who can understand, speak and use English confidently has grown significantly. This development is an expression of the increasing significance of learner-centered and multicultural language teaching methods.

Thus, it may be concluded that multicultural classrooms with effective teachers and facilitated by inclusive teaching strategies are significant in achieving success in acquiring English language. Not only are such classrooms educating a language, but are also producing globally aware, culture sensitive and confident speakers.

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