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## An Exploration of the Effects of 'ESOL for Citizenship' Course on the Sociocultural Integration of Adult Learners into British Society

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#### **Abstract**

Much has been written on funding for ESOL, but little is known about how ESOL learners use language as a tool to integrate into British society. This study seeks to understand the extent to which studying 'ESOL for citizenship course' help learners integrate into British society, the difficulties they encounter, and what ESOL professionals can do to mitigate them. Data was collected through focus group interviews and initial analysis was done using Nvivo software. Three theoretical frameworks were applied: Baker's (2011); Ward and Kennedy's (1999); and Dai and Chen's (2014). The findings revealed that although ESOL learners nursed initial stereotypical views about British culture before arrival, their perceptions significantly improved after arrival. Despite these positive perceptions, they were resistant to assimilate and the gap between home and host cultures remained wide. Findings also unveil that the underlying objective of learning the language was predominantly instrumental. That is, they wanted to learn English as a means of getting a better job or advancing their studies in the UK, than to integrate. Some implications for practice in the ESOL context were identified.

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#### 1. Introduction

he literature on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and integration in the UK is replete with government policy aimed at providing funding and tuition for learning English (Evans, 2015; Rammel, 2007; Shepherd, 2011). Little has been written on how these new arrivals strive to integrate and socialise and the difficulties they encounter in that process (Ameer, 2017). This research intends to add a voice to the latter by conducting a case study with a group of adult ESOL learners at an ESOL provision Centre in Oldham, United Kingdom. The intention was to sample the perception of these learners on the extent to which learning 'ESOL for citizenship' has helped them adapt, socialise, and integrate into the British society. The research also seeks to understand the difficulties learners encountered when using a new language in their daily lives. Citizenship in this context refers to British values. These include democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith (Revell & Bryan, 2018). What are their motivations and expectations for learning 'ESOL for citizenship' and to what extent are these expectations met in real-life situations? The research may enhance understanding of the difficulties encountered by ESOL learners when they use the English language to conduct their daily activities. Such knowledge is useful to the language providers as it would urge them to rethink their approach to the provision of adult English 'literacy'. It may prompt them to be more responsive to the needs of adult ESOL learners when choosing which material to teach.

The research focuses on adult ESOL learners who are studying for the Entry Level 3. The term ESOL or English for Speakers of Other Languages is used in this study to describe English language provision for adult learners (refugees and asylum seekers), who have come to settle permanently in the UK (Schellekens, 2007), and are attending a privately-funded provision. Entry level 3 are the most advanced learners (Court, 2017) at the provision centre and are expected to have made the most progress in learning English and integrating within the British society. They have been consciously chosen for this study because they

can communicate better in English than learners of Entry levels 1 and 2. This implies that they are better suited to provide the information and data needed to complete this research. Most of these learners are from sub-Saharan African countries like Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Guinea Bissau, but there are also learners from some Asian countries and South America. These learners come with varying educational, religious, and socio-cultural backgrounds. This rich diversity of learners may provide us with a comparative view of their adaptation processes. The research combines both ESOL and citizenship studies, not only because I taught the two together, but also because it is a requirement for ESOL with citizenship courses to use or adapt materials specially prepared for ESOL and citizenship (NIACE & LLU+ 2005, cited in Paton & Wilkins, 2009). This is important because while learning the language, migrants are expected to simultaneously acquire British values, culture, and customs. Citizenship lessons provide them with an opportunity to learn these values which include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance (Revell & Bryan, 2018). British history and geography lessons are also taught which are fundamental in passing the 'Life in the UK' test – a prerequisite to applying for citizenship and leave to stay (Bartram, 2018). From 2005 onward, migrants hoping to become 'British citizens' or applying for settlement are required to show that they have either:

- acquired a certain level of English by studying an ESOL with citizenship course and achieving a 'Skills for Life Certificate in Speaking and Listening at Entry level 1, 2, or 3', or
- b) passed the 'Life in the UK' test which is provided in English or have already achieved a certain level of English at level 3 or above (Sunderland, 2009, p. 21).

It is in the above context that I studied the experiences of adult ESOL learners about learning language and citizenship as the two are practically inseparable in the current context.

This study aims at exploring the perception of adult ESOL learners about the influence of learning language and citizenship on their socio-cultural integration into the British society. In meeting this aim, the following two research questions were formulated:

- 1. How does the learning of language and citizenship benefit adult ESOL learners in their socio-cultural integration within the British society?
- What are the difficulties encountered by ESOL learners in their socio-cultural integration process and how can these be addressed in the 'English for Citizenship' syllabus?

The first question addresses both the *integrative* and instrumental motivation for learning the language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017; Samad, Etemadzadeh, & Far, 2012). For instance, do learners desire to acquire language and citizenship in order to participate in and develop a sense of belonging to their community (integrative)? Or do learners acquire language and citizenship/culture so that they can achieve practical goals, such as, getting a good job, improve their economic gaining social recognition status or (instrumental)? The second question assumes that learners have now acquired language skills and citizenship knowledge and are ready to enforce both their integrative and instrumental motivation in society. As there might be some encountered setbacks during implementation stage, learners must employ various coping mechanisms to deal with these challenges. What, therefore, are these difficulties and how do they cope with them? What can be done by ESOL teachers and providers to address these practical challenges that learners face? In the light of the above, the two objectives proposed are:

- to seek to better understand the services rendered by the centre and learners' perceptions of them; and
- to appreciate the extent to which those services address the difficulties that learners encounter in their practical effort at integrating into the British society.

Providers of ESOL often group learners as a homogeneous entity who lack the language skills and sociocultural knowledge of their host country to be able to lead a meaningful life and effectively participate in society (Shellekens, 2007). Their approach to teaching is done in a way that does not consider learners' previous social and cultural experiences (Shellekens, 2007), and how these could be used to meet the challenges they face in their host country. ESOL teachers often plan and teach language

content in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and language function (Paton & Wilkins, 2009) and often fail to teach the language within the context of use which would directly benefit the learner in the social arena, for example, situations in which learners intend to operate in real life such as socialising, job-seeking, travelling, shopping, or visiting the doctor (Paton & Wilkins, 2009). This research seeks to draw on the experience of the learners and devise strategies to help them to not only express their understanding in English, but translate that understanding into daily societal interaction. In teaching ESOL in the context of citizenship, teachers must acknowledge the fact that some learners come with an already sophisticated understanding of citizenship (Shellekens, 2007). For instance, some have been involved in politics in their home country and others have been involved in commerce and business. Some might have been highly educated up to university or doctoral levels. They simply do not have the English language skills required to express themselves in complex concepts (Taylor, 2007). "It is a real challenge for teachers to deliver suitable provision for this wide spectrum of needs, from learners who have little schooling, to fully qualified engineers and doctors" (Shellekens, 2007, p. 9).

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

Baker's (2011) Intercultural Awareness Model, Ward and Kennedy's (1999) Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS), and Dai and Chen's (2014) Intercultural Communication Model were employed as major theoretical frameworks to gauge the intercultural awareness and sociocultural adaptation of my adult ESOL learners in Britain. There are three levels of intercultural awareness as asserted by Baker (2011). These are: basic cultural awareness, advanced cultural awareness, and intercultural awareness in that order of progressive importance. Basic cultural awareness is a general awareness of the roles of cultures on our own and 'others' communication. These include our ability to articulate our own cultural perspective and be able to compare cultures at a general level (Baker, 2011). Advanced cultural awareness is an awareness of the complexity of cultures which includes our ability to go beyond our initial cultural generalisations and stereotypes and start

comparing and mediating between cultures at specific levels (Baker, 2011). Lastly, Intercultural awareness is an awareness of the roles of culture in intercultural communication which is the capacity to mediate and negotiate between different emergent culturally and contextually based communication modes and frames of references (Baker, 2011, p. 13).

Sociocultural adaptation is one of two crosscultural adjustment mechanisms deployed by sojourners to adapt in their host culture, the other being psychological adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Sociocultural adaptation, which is the focus in this study, is related to the ability to 'fit in', to acquire culturally appropriate skills, and to negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 660). The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, which is the second framework, is a flexible instrument that initially contained 20-23 items (Spencer-Oatev & Franklin, 2009), but now has up to 41 items (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006) that can be modified according to the sample under investigation (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The sociocultural adaptation of sojourners, which is often viewed in terms of behavioural competence, is "strongly influenced by factors underpinning culture learning and social skills acquisition" (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 661). These include the length of time residing in the new culture, knowledge of the new culture, amount of interaction and identification with host nationals, cultural distance, language fluency, and acculturation strategies (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Acculturation refers to the changes that occur because of contact with people, groups, or social influences with differing cultures (Schwartz, Unger, & Zamboanga, 2010). The above factors would be fundamental when analysing the data to better understand ESOL learners' levels and strategies of sociocultural adaptation.

The third framework Intercultural Communication, can be regarded as a sociocultural process in which the cultural dimension is pivotal (Baker, 2011). The concept of intercultural communication is the exchange of information or engagement in dialogue among people of different cultures (Atieno Okech, Pimpleton, Vannatta, & Champe, 2015, p. 270). According to Dai and Chen (2014), there are four dimensions that underpin intercultural communication competence, namely: cultural awareness, personal attributes, communication skills, and psychological adaptation. Each of the above dimensions was further divided into four components. The components of cultural awareness are social values, social norms, social customs, and social systems. A personal attribute is composed of self-disclosure, selfawareness, self-concept, and self-relaxation. Communication skills involve message skills, social skills, flexibility, and interaction management. Lastly, psychological adaptation constitutes frustration, stress, alienation, and ambiguity (Dai & Chen, 2014, p. 17). The data would later reveal that adult ESOL learners employed some of these skills in their process of sociocultural adaptation and integration into British society.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data Collection: The Focus Group **Interviews**

There were two focus group interviews. Participants were asked to sign the informed consent form before each interview began. The first one, attended by six informants was activity-based. Learners were given a series of activities to understand both their expectations prior to arriving in Britain and their degree of integration into the British society. This task allowed participants to reflect on their own stereotypes and preconceptions about the UK and attempt to demystify some of these myths. This exercise gave the researcher a better understanding of some of the cultural barriers that inhibited the integration of target participants into British society. An exploration of participants' beliefs, values, and opinions about British culture and customs was done using flashcards and matching a set of questions to the pictures on the cards. This was a kinaesthetic attempt to assess participants' knowledge of British values and customs. These activities lasted for an hour and 30 minutes and were very interactive. The purpose of this was to prepare the ground for the second interview and to help slant the interview questions to the desired purpose of the research.

The second interview was held the next day at the same centre, but only five members attended, including three from the previous

session and two new members who were absent in the first session. It was a semi-structured focus group interview which lasted for one hour. This means that the interviewer did not stick to a script and follow-up questions were asked based on the answers provided. This interview was recorded with two recording devices to be on the safe side in case one failed. The interview was divided into three sections. In section one, participants were required to fill in a sheet which asked questions relating to their profile (for example: age, gender, and occupation). Section two asked questions relating to motivations to learn the language, belonging, cultural integration, and identity. In section three, questions relating to the challenges encountered in their integration process and how they cope with these challenges were asked. The group dynamics was positive, and the discussions were engaging as the interviewer gave each participant a turn to answer each question.

### 3.2. Data Handling: Storage and Transcription

The recordings from the interview and written data from the activities were stored in a locked cupboard at home. The researcher was the only one who had access to that cupboard. The next day, the recordings were manually transcribed to ensure that the researcher acquainted himself with the data during the process and that no information was left out. Pictures of the task learners did in the first group activity were taken and archived. The pictures and the transcript were saved on a One Drive account which was password protected. The recordings and activity sheets were immediately destroyed, whilst the researcher waited for the right time to commence analysing the data.

#### 3.3. Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in a way that adhered to ethical requirements for doing research in the UK – which is the legal jurisdiction of this project. These ethical obligations are embedded into the Data Protection Act (1998), the General Data Protection Regulations (2018), and the Ethical

Guidelines for Educational research (McCulloch, 2018).

#### 3.4. Data Analysis

Finding a path through the thicket information that make up qualitative data can be baffling to many researchers confronting such data for the first time (Bryman, 2016). That is why Denscombe (2017) suggests five different stages to follow in the analysis of qualitative data which were implemented in this research.

- First, the text was transcribed and loaded to Nvivo software
- Then, obvious recurrent themes or issues were identified, notes were added to data and memos written to capture ideas.
- Data was then coded, and codes grouped into categories, and then concepts that encapsulated categories were identified
- Findings were written down and points illustrated by quotes. Figures, charts, mind maps, and tables were used to illustrate findings

Finally, findings were linked to the literature and compared with alternative explanations (Denscombe, 2017, p. 263).

Coding, categorisation, and analysis were partly done using Nvivo software. MindView software was also used to regroup and plot the categories for analysis. First, the interview transcript or data were uploaded to Nvivo, and coding was done by highlighting references and attributing themes to them. Themes were attributed based on the literature, taking into consideration the need to address the research questions. Each informant was inputted as a case and each one of them linked to their references. That means each reference or data provided was linked to the interviewee who provided it (using Nvivo), and by so doing, a case file or 'story' was produced for each informant. The analysis was run and a total of 42 themes, and 125 references were produced which were exported to an Excel document and then copied and pasted into Word as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** *Coded Themes and their References* 

Coded Themes and their References  Name	Files	References
Cases\\Accent as a barrier	1	4
Cases\\acculturation strategy	1	7
Cases\\approach-avoidance conflict	1	3
Cases\\barriers to integration	1	4
Cases\\Belonging	1	1
Cases\\British values	1	7
Cases\\Care for others	1	1
Cases\\community events	1	2
Cases\\create an advice office	1	1
Cases\\Culture distance	1	7
Cases\\differential social lifestyles	1	4
Cases\\English brings confidence	1	4
Cases\\Feeling of isolation	1	1
Cases\\Feeling shy and Nervous	1	3
Cases\\Generations & integration	1	4
Cases\\Importance of English	1	4
Cases\\Individualism	1	2
Cases\\Instrumental motivation	1	3
Cases\\Integration	1	3
Cases\\Integrative motivation	1	3
Cases\\Intrinsic motivation	1	1
Cases\\Knowledge of new culture	1	1
Cases\\Lack of interpreters	1	3
Cases\\Length of time residing	1	2
Cases\\Mediation- connect	1	6
Cases\\More free centres	1	1
Cases\\negative perception	1	3
Cases\\No family ties	1	1
Cases\\No prior knowledge of English	1	1
Cases\\Number of days learning Eng	1	2
Cases\\Obliged to learn English	1	4
Cases\\positive perception	1	10
Cases\\Powerlessness	1	1
Cases\\Prior knowlegde of English	1	4
Cases\\Proactiveness	1	3
Cases\\Religion as barrier	1	3
Cases\\religious differences	1	1
Cases\\Resistance to assimilation	1	2
Cases\\Rights and values	1	1
Cases\\Tea and Coffee	1	2
Cases\\Use of Interpreters	1	2
Cases\\Ways to improve	1	3

A coding summary was produced which shows the percentage coverage of data for each interviewee (cases), and the percentage coverage of 'significant' themes as shown in Table 2. Note that only informants who provided significant data and themes with significant references, as deemed by Nvivo, were displayed.

 Table 2

 Coded Summary, Cases and Percentage Coverage

Coding	Percentage Coverage
Cases\\Alaba	14.42%
Cases\\Dora	19.22%
Cases\\Ramala	13.15%
Cases\\Shabab	25.72%
Nodes\\Culture distance	6.48%
Nodes\\differential social lifestyles	5.48%
Nodes\\Feeling of isolation	2.98%
Nodes\\Instrumental motivation	3.78%
Nodes\\Knowledge of new culture\acculturation strategy	11.16%
Nodes\\Lack of interpreters	3.65%
Nodes\\Lack of interpreters\Use of Interpreters	3.25%
Nodes\\Mediation- connect	5.31%
Nodes\\negative perception	4.53%
Nodes\\Prior knowledge of English\Importance of English\positive perception	8.15%
Nodes\\Proactiveness	4.42%
Nodes\\Religion as barrier	4.83%
Nodes\\Resistance to assimilation\approach-avoidance conflict	3.13%
Nodes\\Resistance to assimilation\Integration\Generations & integration	8.13%
Nodes\\Resistance to assimilation\Integration\Generations & integration\barriers to integration	5.79%
Nodes\\Ways to improve	3.47%

In Table 2, we can see that the most significant category, with 11.16% was knowledge of a new culture/acculturation strategy. The least significant was feeling of isolation with just 2.98%. Likewise, Shabab scored a quarter of all data coverage among participants at 25.72%, followed by Dora, at 19.22%, Alaba, at 14.42%, Ramala, at 13.15%, and Asha, at 0.27%. The latter's coverage was not displayed in the table as it was insignificant per Nvivo. Her quietness

throughout the interview may reflect the immensity of communication difficulties that some ESOL learners experience even in the wider society. Each of the 125 references mentioned in Table 1 also had coverage percentages which cannot be displayed here for lack of space. The data in Table 2 was also represented in a chart for a more visual understanding as shown in Figure 1.

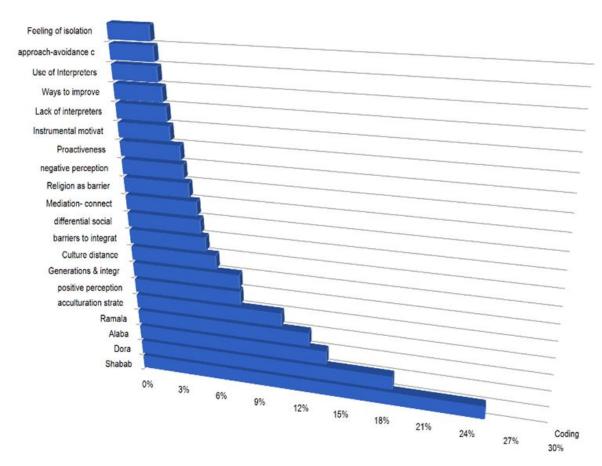
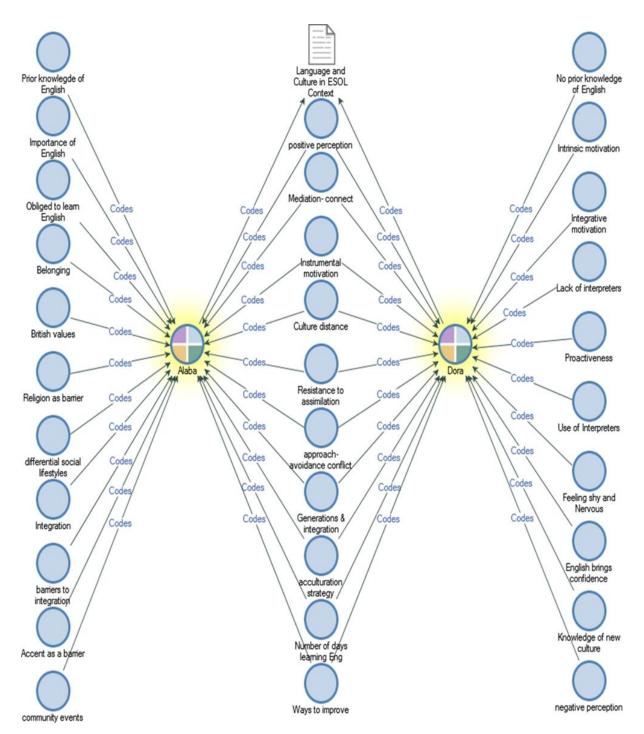


Figure 1 Chart Showing Coded Summary, Cases and Percentages

Cross-gender case comparison was done among the four significant cases - males versus females. The essence of doing this was to understand differences in perception across gender as shown in the 'butterfly' Figures 2 and 3 below. By just looking at the figures, one may also understand same-sex perceptions without running a separate analysis for that. On both

butterfly-like figures, we can see that all the categories lined in the middle are convergent perceptions and those lined at the sides are divergent perceptions of the cases compared. However, convergent perceptions must not be necessarily regarded as agreement neither should divergent positions be regarded as disagreement.



**Figure 2**Gender-Based Case Comparison between Alaba and Dora

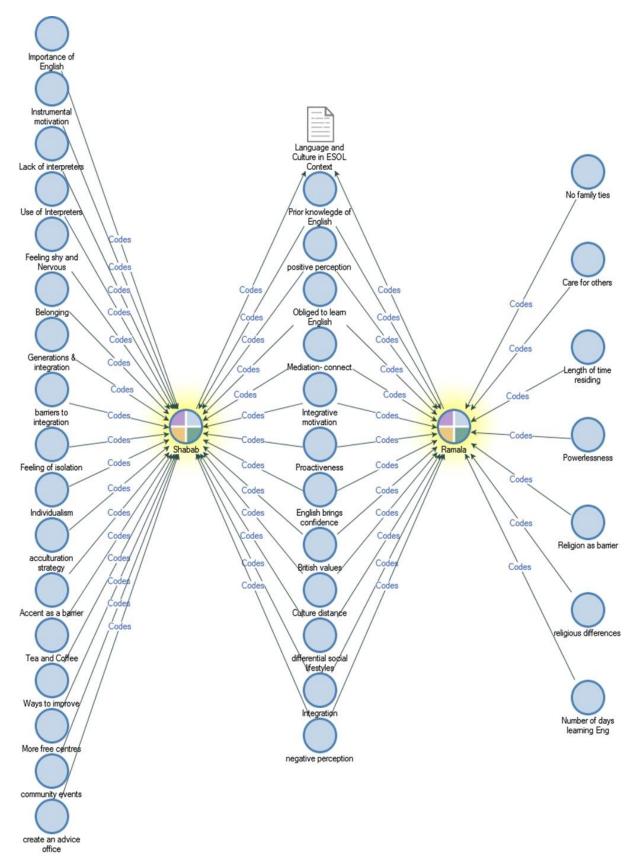


Figure 3 Gender-Based Case Comparison between Shabab and Ramala

Participants presented their ideas and thoughts in different ways, sometimes expressing the same idea in a different way and this may have affected the coding process. However, if we go by the butterfly-like figures above, we will notice that culture distance, positive perception, and mediation were themes that ran across all four cases irrespective of gender. There was no theme that only females identified with, which tells us that there was no female-only factor that influenced integration according to the data. However, there were two male-only factors identified. These were 'accent as a barrier' and the need for community events. Only males thought accent was a major barrier to their socialisation and integration into British

society. They also shared a similar perception of the need for community events to bring both host and 'home communities' together. Most of the other themes were shared among all participants with varying degrees of coverage, as earlier noted.

#### 4. Results

The findings were grouped into six broad categories which were derived from several themes that emerged from the data. These are represented in the Mind Map Figures 4 and 5 below which were constructed using the MindView software. Each of these categories is examined in greater detail.

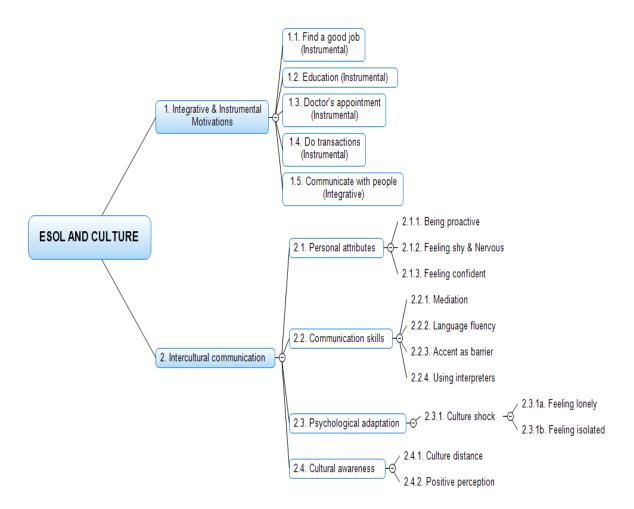


Figure 4
Mind Map Showing Categories for Analysis

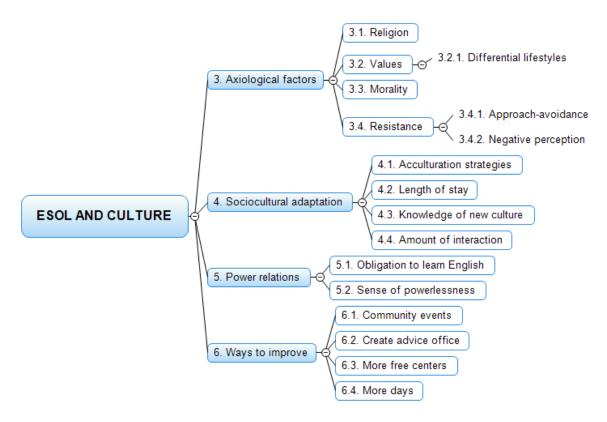


Figure 5 Mind Map Showing Further Categories for Analysis

#### 4.1. **Integrative** versus **Instrumental Motivations**

Data revealed that ESOL learners' motivations for learning English were both integrative and instrumental. However, it seemed that their instrumental motivation was predominant and overshadowed the integrative. Evidently, most of the reasons they gave for learning English were to enable them in finding a good job, get education. and attend appointment without the need for an interpreter. This is what Alaba, Dora, and Shabab had to

You have to know how to use their language first ... to join education classes ... to find a good job, you have to know to speak English very well- Alaba.

I was working as a cleaner before as my main job. But now, I can work as a receptionist or as a waiter. I can find any job because of the English language that I now speak- Dora.

... and when you apply for a job, you must know English to communicate in English.

Even you have an appointment, you go Doctor without interpreter- Shabab.

Only one integrative reason was given, which was the ability to communicate with other people. Nevertheless, this reason could be arguably instrumental as it depends on the motive for communicating with other people. If the motive is instrumental, like looking for a job or attending a doctor's appointment, then this reason could hardly be integrative. Therefore, it seems that ESOL learners enrolled in language classes without much desire to use this language to develop a sense of belonging to the host community. Rather, they wanted to use the language as a means of achieving practical goals such as getting a well-paid employment opportunity, having further education, or being socially recognized (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Yu & Downing, 2012, p. 459). The data also supports Schellekens' (2007) postulation that both men and women were equally interested in learning the English language for work and study purposes, regardless of their ethnic minority background.

Using interpreters can be very daunting to ESOL learners in their quest towards achieving both their instrumental and integrative motives, as highlighted by Shabab above. The lack of interpreters can be a strong motivational factor for learning English, which could fit both within the instrumental and integrative niche. Many local offices do not offer translating and interpreting services and, if they do, the languages they cover are limited. Hence, non-English speakers must bring their own translators and interpreters to access those services. The daunting and awkward nature of this challenging exercise was vividly driven home by Dora when she said:

Before, somebody must go with me to somewhere, listen and explain. If they don't have time, I go by myself and say please can you write it down, and I go ask my friend to explain later? Even over the phone, I would say, I don't speak, I don't' speak. If there is someone next to me, I would pass the phone to them to listen and explain.

This apparent nightmare was further emphasized by Ramala in the following words:

Before I came to England my English is very low, so I used interpreters wherever I go. For dentist or everywhere ... when I go outside shopping or anything.

Giving these difficulties in accessing important services, it would be cynical to downplay the role played by 'lack of interpreters' in motivating learners to enrol in an 'ESOL for citizenship' course.

#### 4.2. Intercultural Communication

Data identified some traces of intercultural communication that can be linked to each of dimensions of intercultural four communication competence proposed by Dia and Chen's (2014) framework. Three elements of the first dimension - personal attribute, were identified. These were self-concept, selfawareness, and self-relaxation. Regarding self-concept, pro-activeness emerged as an important concept that could enhance the intercultural communication competence of adult ESOL learners. It was observed that learners who were more proactive seemed to be progressing better in their sociocultural

adaptation in Britain. Some examples of this surprised variable were underlined by learners themselves in these words:

... but I am running after all the schools and all the classes of English to learn, to be in a high level or to know how to manage all my things around me by myself because I live alone here now – Ramala.

... but I studied a lot and practiced every day. So now my English is more confident-Shabab

Furthermore, self-relaxation according to the data was achieved because of the confidence that came with learning English. The unsettled and awkward period of self-doubt starts diminishing once learners have acquired a certain level of English. They become relaxed and their confidence is boosted. The selfawareness of their inability to properly articulate in English, which brought shyness and nervousness, gradually faded away as their English improved. Just like Shabab acknowledged in the quote above, Ramala and Dora reinforced this feeling below.

Before I learned English, I feel embarrassed when somebody talked to me and I don't understand. When you don't speak English and people speak to you, you respond by laughing

If somebody speaks to me, I tried to avoid by walking away. But now I try to speak and if I don't understand, I say I don't understand that and ask them to say that again ...

The second dimension of Dai and Chen's (2014) model – communication skills, was observed in the data. Dai and Chen's (2014) four elements of communication skills, that is, message skills, interaction management, flexibility, and social skills were observed. Data indicated that some learners had flexibility and were ready to adopt some British cultural practices. Some were ready and making efforts at interacting with British people. Dora has got a British boyfriend while Shabab thought getting married to a British woman could be a good way to interact. However, Shabab insisted that British people should make more effort to approach people like him and not the reverse. Dora goes to the pub on some days, though she does not drink alcohol nor smoke, she gets to interact with British

people this way. Alaba, on his part, is completely resistant to any form of interaction as he thinks his culture and the British culture are incompatible. Ramala does not mind interacting but she feels more comfortable doing so with the older Britons as she thinks the vounger generation of Britons seem not to like foreigners like her. It seems from the data that females possess better social skills, flexibility, and interactional skills than males. Although all participants agreed that language was important for mediation and is necessary to connect with people, we have noted how this mediation can be frustrated by the lack of interpreters for those who cannot speak English. This can have a negative effect on interaction and the sociocultural adaptation of ESOL learners into British society. Another barrier to communication as indicated by the informants was accent. The variety of accents spoken in Britain (Thomas Wareing, Singh, Peccei, & Jones, 1998), can militate against effective comprehension of the English language especially for ESOL learners.

Nowadays, younger people you don't understand their accent, so language barrier stops you from integrating with *them* – *Shabab*.

Different accents. Some people speak with different accents. Also, you walk in the streets, you find different accents. You can't speak with all the people in the same accent- Alaba.

The third dimension under intercultural communication according to Dai and Chen (2014), is psychological adaptation, and the elements of this dimension are frustration, stress, ambiguity, and alienation. I have classed all four elements under the broad heading -'culture shock'; which is the psychological and, or physical consequences of changes in circumstances (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). When this happens, people can experience feelings such as sense of loss, feelings of deprivation, helplessness and isolation, irritation, and anger about foreign practices (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Evidence of culture shock emerged from the data, especially the feeling of isolation experienced by Ramala and Shabab, and irritation about foreign practices asserted by Alaba.

... even in workplace ... those who speak high level English group together, so, you feel alone, you sit alone. If no one invites you, how can you engage that society or share with them? Even you don't know your neighbours for one year, both sides. So how can you share your feeling and express your culture? Shabab questioned.

My family and my children are in Sudan. I live here alone. No way, you have to do it -Ramala commented.

She also went further to express her irritation and anger against the British healthcare system, especially the waiting time to see a GP and the bureaucratic nature of British public services, such as waiting up to ten working days to receive important letters. Alaba does not hesitate to express his irritation either.

*In my opinion, I think I don't I belong to the* British society because different cultures, different lifestyles, different moralities

The fourth and last dimension of intercultural communication according to Dai & Chen (2014) is cultural awareness and the elements constituting this dimension are social values, social norms, social customs, and social systems. Using data, these three elements were applied in combination with Baker's (2011) cultural awareness model to evaluate the intercultural communication competence of adult ESOL learners. Baker (2011) proposed levels of cultural awareness for intercultural communication competence, namely: basic cultural awareness (level 1), advanced cultural awareness (level 2), and intercultural awareness (level 3). An analysis of the first interview session revealed that, prior to arriving to the UK, all my ESOL learners possessed just the basic level of Bakers' intercultural awareness classification. They had a general awareness of the role of culture on their own and others' communication. This involved their awareness of the similarities and differences of cultures at a general level, and their ability to compare cultures at a general level (Baker, 2011, p. 203). However, this generalisation was underpinned by stereotypes which was infected by prejudices, which in turn led to Othering (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010). This was evident in what some of them said about their thoughts prior and post-arrival to the UK.

Before I came to the UK, I thought all British people are rich. I'll find some of them poor and stressful. When I came, I found that some of them are homeless and have depression. It is very different from what I expected

Before I came here, I thought the people in UK crazy about football, When I came, I found the people don't crazy about football – it is less what I expected

Before I came here, I thought it will be very hard to get halal food, when I came, I found it's very easy. It's not exactly what I expected.

These stereotypical thoughts about British culture revealed a lack of awareness of the social norms, social customs, social values, and social systems (Dai & Chen, 2014), which could have impacted learners' perception of host cultures upon arrival. Data disclosed that all learners went on to improve their perception and awareness of British values and customs, but this improvement was not reflected in their ability to interact or integrate. Their increased positive perception about British culture did not correlate with better sociocultural adaptation as initially predicted. In fact, cultural distance remained wide and up to ten references to cultural distance emerged from the data. Only 20% of participants in the second interview (corresponding to 1 person) showed some signs of advanced cultural awareness. Dora was the only one who had attempted to move beyond her initial cultural generalisations (Baker, 2011) and stereotypes in intercultural interaction. She is befriending a British man; she goes to a pub and had started liking fish and chips. Irrespective of the length of stay in the UK, no learner had attained the final level which is intercultural awareness. Their capacity to "negotiate and mediate between different culturally and contextually grounded communication modes ... based on an advanced understanding of cultures in intercultural communication" (Baker, 2011; Cheng, Adekola, & Barnes, 2019) remained inexistent.

#### 4.3. Axiological Factors

A small element of axiological positioning emanated from the data which involved members' perceptions about their values, religion, and morality in comparison to British values. These differential lifestyles, values, religion, and morality were negatively echoed by some participants. This might have been responsible for the resistance to integrate expressed by some members. For others, acculturation is supposed to be a partial, nonassimilatory process where they must continue to maintain their own culture while gradually buying into some British values. Even the participant who seemed to have attained some degree of advanced cultural awareness thought complete assimilation was impossible and refused to identify herself as British. Furthermore, religious differences were a major stumbling block to integration and a red line for some participants.

My first issue in my life is religion. I found that some British people do not respect their religion. They just live their lives free without religion – Alaba

No, I don't belong because the social life is different from my country, and, morality is different – Alaba.

Belonging for me is to join community without leaving my morality – Shabab

Referring to the point I mentioned before about different cultures and different religion- that can stop integration. For example, if I have to integrate with British people, I have to go to the park with them, and I have to have a drink with them, and this is against my religion and against my culture – Alaba.

Despite this apparent resistance, Alaba acknowledged that he has started abandoning very close community ties with people from his country to gravitate towards British people instead, as a giant step to acculturate.

Too much integration, the Sudanese community is too much integrated. I have abandoned too much integration with the Sudanese community

This could be an indication of approach-avoidance conflict which was also observed in other participants like Dora. Approach-avoidance conflict is a psychological term used to describe the conflict that occurs when a stimulus simultaneously possesses conflicting motivational emotions, inducing opposing behavioural responses (Chu et al., 2020). Simply put, it is the conflict that occurs when

someone tries to eat their cake and have it at the same time. When Dora says she goes to pub, but she does not drink, or when Shabab says he dislikes extreme tattoos, but normal tattoos are okay, we not only notice an approach-avoidance conflict, but also a conflict of identity. It seems learners' identities are continuously being shaped as they dig deeper into the trenches of integration. This value-based rift is at the centre of dialogism, "which sees social and ethical values as the means by which fundamental I/Other split articulates itself in specific situations and this is thus a version of axiology" (Holquist, 2002. p. 31).

#### 4.4. Sociocultural Adaptation

In this section, adult ESOL learners' sociocultural adaptation into British society was analysed using Ward and Kennedy's (1999) Sociocultural Adaptation Scale - SCAS. The scale currently contains 41 elements, some of which have already been mentioned in the previous sections. Here, other elements of the SCAS that can be used to explain the sociocultural adaptation of ESOL learners were explored. Ward and Kennedy (1999) believed that the following factors can strongly influence cultural learning and social skills acquisition. These are: acculturation strategies, length of time residing in a new culture, knowledge of new culture, and amount of interaction and identification with host nationals. These factors are regrouped from elements contained in the SCAS.

Data revealed that ESOL learners adopted various acculturation strategies in Britain. In fact, there were up to 7 references to acculturation strategy, which was one of the highest, after positive perception. Learning the English language was an important strategy because, according to them, as soon as you learn the language, you start understanding the culture. This goes to support the claim that there is an intertwined relationship between language and culture (Kramsch, 1998; Kumbalonah, 2013). Talking of the cultural advantages of learning the language, Dora said:

*Now I understand the culture, what they* are doing, their beliefs and their food. I don't know very well, but I understand a little their culture

Another acculturation strategy that learners proposed was the organisation of community events with local people. The interaction between local people and migrant communities was perceived as vital for integration. However, some participants would like to see local people being more proactive in this respect. They expect British people to invite them to community events and not the reverse.

If community come to you and tell you, our community is down here, come and join usso you go and join them and learn or practice with them if it is good for community. If people invite you, that is better, instead of you asking them-Shabab.

Others are abandoning close ties with people from their own community so that they can gravitate towards British people, as an acculturation strategy. Regarding the length of time residing in a new culture, data captured only two references, one reference to knowledge of a new culture and no reference to the amount of interaction. Some learners, like Ramala, acknowledged that the length of time residing in the country will be favourable for integration but also for 'power' and confidence in the host country.

Maybe the first year, you are not confident. You are being hesitated because until now, you cannot feel you are powerful and for such reason you feel you don't belong.

Maybe next year, after five years or six years, you will be stronger...make a role in the society.

Thus, according to my data, the length of time residing in a new culture was only barely significant to integration, while knowledge of a new culture and amount of interaction were insignificant. However, the term significant and insignificant must be treated with caution here. These factors did not emerge strongly in the data probably because they were not adequately explored in the interview and the sample size was very small.

#### 4.5. Power Relations

We have already noted the sense of powerlessness that some ESOL learners, like Ramala, feel living in the UK when she talks about her loss of confidence and power due to the inability to speak the host language. This lack of confidence was re-echoed by nearly all participants – a lack of confidence that has affected their sense of belonging and identity. Learning the language becomes an obligation to regain this confidence, power, and identity. "You can't do anything without English", one participant said. "It is compulsory to know English, to speak English and to do everything in English", another interjected. This sense of obligation to learn can be perceived as a form of power and control, where only those who speak proper English can share and control this power, while those who do not, are left out. In this case, language is used to distinguish between the in-group and the outgroup. Being able to show that you can use language appropriately according to the norms associated (Thomas et al., 1998) with British people helps to establish your membership of the British society. Even when the native speakers show considerable tolerance and patience with L2 learners, having to stumble and hesitate in another language can be a very frustrating and intimidating experience (Hummel, 2014) for adult ESOL learners.

### 4.6. Perceived Ways to Improve

Another important category that surfaced from the data was the perception of learners about possible ways to improve the services rendered to them. In terms of pedagogy, learners suggested that tutors should make more use of social media, YouTube, and PowerPoint because it is "easier to learn with photos and videos than speaking and writing". Furthermore, learners were unanimous on employing a conversational approach to learning where everyone can themselves and share their experiences. This way, they would consolidate the speaking aspect of language which they thought was necessary in achieving their instrumental motives. They would also want to see an increase in the number of days as two days per week was not enough for them. Most ESOL learners do not speak much English at home or in their daily lives as they have little or no contact with native English speakers, except for transactional relationships with the doctor or child's teacher (Schellekens, 2007) for instance. Spending more days at the centre learning English will help improve their language skills. The government should fund more language centres as the demand for ESOL centres is growing while the supply is stagnant. Finally, participants suggested that the centre should create an advice office or put in place an officer who can give them specialist advice and information regarding local services.

#### 5. Discussion

Most interviewees' accounts of their motivation to learn English was predominantly instrumental than integrative (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017; Samad et al., 2012), Therefore, with respect to the first research question, this study has established that the underlying objective of learning the language was to a large extent instrumental. It mostly benefited ESOL learners in achieving their practical goals such as getting a better job, attending doctor's appointment without need for an interpreter or improving their selfconfidence and social status. Only to a lesser extent did ESOL learners think learning English has helped them to integrate into British society. This was evident as the gap in culture distance remained wide, despite learners' positive perception about British culture. Interestingly, the high positive perception about British culture did not correlate with their desire to integrate. This finding contradicted my initial presuppositionthat a positive perception towards the host culture would lead to greater willingness to integrate. Most interviewees' accounts of their own experience and culture-related behaviours, together with their awareness of British culture, are a strong indication of basic cultural awareness (Baker, 2011; Cheng et al., 2019). Another surprising, but emergent theme in this research was the role pro-activeness plays in fostering integration. Despite the gap in culture distance, the interviewees tended to be very proactive in their efforts at learning the language and acquiring aspects of British culture. However, they thought British people need to be pro-active and welcoming as well, for integration is a two-way lane. Some interviewees even attempted to blame the British people for failing to be pro-active in integrating migrants like them.

In comparing cases across gender, some interesting outcomes were recorded. The first is that no specific female-only perception about integration was identified. However, there were some male-only perceptions like accent as a barrier to integration and the need for community events between host and home

cultures. Therefore, it seems males' perceptions about integration were more convergent than females. It also seemed males perceived much more barriers to integration than females (see the butterfly-shaped figures above). This could be a pointer that males may experience more difficulties in acculturating than females. This claim is supported by the fact that the only interviewee who had attained some degree of advanced cultural awareness as proven by the data was a female.

There was also a generational factor that emerged which was not dealt with in the analysis because it did not fit into any of the broad categories. Interviewees seemed to agree that they felt more at ease with the older generation of British people than the younger generations. They thought the older generation of British people are friendlier and more welcoming than the younger ones. This is another interesting finding as the majority of Brexit voters were older people above 65 (Whitely & Clarke, 2016), with the desire to control immigration being their underlying reason for voting leave. Adult ESOL learners also reported difficulties in understanding the accent of the younger British people. Those who had children felt that their children had been assimilated to the British culture and this sometimes caused cultural conflict at home.

It is interesting that all ESOL learners in this study reported being largely instrumentally motivated, that is, they wanted to learn English as a tool to get a better job or further their studies in the UK, rather than to integrate. That could be why despite employing various strategies towards acculturation, the cultural distance between them and their home culture remained wide. The issue then is not only about their low levels of English language proficiency, but an interplay of a whole lot of factors like religion, differential lifestyles, lack of cultural awareness, power relations and identity negotiation. This finding supports those made by Ameer's (2017) Ph.D. thesis, that ESOL for citizenship courses do not enhance the social integration of immigrants as "it depends on various social factors: language use, length of stay in the UK, type of neighbourhood, extended family in the UK, and decisions made by the family" (Ameer, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, the course did not impact immigrant's change of identity and there was a

firm resistance to assimilation as participants still strongly identified themselves with their native country or culture. "I continue to feel African", one participant asserted. "I don't feel that I belong here because of the culture, everything is different", another reiterated. Getting British nationality or passport was only viewed as a status (Ameer, 2017), which could enable them to achieve their predominantly instrumental goals. The findings suggest that ESOL providers, teachers, and local authorities need to increase their support to help ESOL learners develop intercultural awareness which would be pivotal in facilitating intercultural communication (Estaji & Rahimi, 2018) and sociocultural adaptation. Furthermore, language teachers, providers, and educators must be aware of the interrelatedness of language and culture. This implies that the increased attention to language must be used within its cultural context. ESOL learners should not only develop proficiency in English but do so within the appropriateness of interactional style and behaviour (Malave & Duquette, 1991) acceptable to native speakers.

Finally, two important questions can be raised from this study's findings which could constitute the basis for future studies. The first is why do refugees and asylum seekers resist acculturation despite having a high positive perception about British values and customs? The second is why are the older Britons perceived as more welcoming than the younger ones despite the former voting massively to leave the EU largely because of immigration?

This research has raised some implication for *practice* and has helped to shape my perception and approach to teaching ESOL learners. ESOL professionals in general can draw some important lessons from this study. Firstly, ESOL teachers should assist learners to improve their motivation (especially the integrative one), by showing that learning a second language can be a vehicle to developing cultural awareness (Baker 2001), which can help facilitate their integration into the British society. Secondly, ESOL teachers should be able to identify why ESOL learners are studying the new language (Oxford & Shearin, 1996), and adapt their teaching approaches to learners' individual needs differentiating in the classroom. Thirdly, ESOL teachers should endeavour to make the L2

classroom a welcoming and positive place, where psychological needs like culture shock are identified and met, and where language anxiety is kept to the minimum (OzGur & Griffiths, 2012). Fourthly, ESOL teachers should learn to accept diversity in the way learners establish and meet their goals, based on differences in lifestyles, religion, educational levels, gender, and age. Furthermore, they should help shape ESOL learners' beliefs about success and failure in L2 learning and encourage positive beliefs. Finally, ESOL teachers should be able to help learners develop their own intrinsic reward (OzGur & Griffiths, 2012) by promoting a sense of greater selfefficacy and increasing motivation to continue learning the L2 (Oxford & Shearin, 1996, cited in Ozgur & Griffiths, 2012, p. 1111).

The main *limitations* of this study are that only the voices of the learners were heard because of the small size of the research. Future research should consider interviewing the management and teachers and increasing the sample size. Another limitation is that learners were not observed, neither in the classroom nor outside during social interactions in real life. Further studies may consider undertaking participant observations to collect natural ethnographic data.

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