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Experiences of Ethnic Acceptance and Prejudice in English Language Learning: Immigrants' Critical Reflections

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The University of San Francisco

EXPERIENCES OF ETHNIC ACCEPTANCE AND PREJUDICE IN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNING: IMMIGRANTS' CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

A Dissertation
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by
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This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Chairperson

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indebted to both of these fine women for their insights, suggestions, and challenges.

Finally, to the six participants in this study, I congratulate them on their willingness to speak out and tell their experiences of ethnic prejudice and acceptance. Their courage, commitment, and generosity is admirable and heartening. Their patience with me and with the process of participatory dialogues was commendable. My wish is that this experience might even further empower them to lead lives that are successful and happy here in the United States. May their stories serve as a catalyst for hope and change for the good among immigrant English language learners.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the thousands of Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants who have risked their lives in the search of freedom and opportunity to come to the United States.

For those who have lost their lives before seeing their promised land, may their struggle not have been in vain.

For those who safely arrived in my homeland, may they find a hearty welcome here among native English speakers.

For those who have been hurt by words or actions of ethnic prejudice, may others come along to help heal their wounds.

For those who have made new friends here and fallen in love with a new people, may God bless them with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Growing up learning Spanish as a second language in Phoenix, Arizona, in

the 1960s, I experienced the wide range of anxieties and challenges of

intercultural communicative competence from age 12 into adulthood. Later in life,

as a Jesuit seminarian teaching English as a second language in Peru from 1983 to

1985, I came to realize that native Spanish speakers were judging my way of

living, speaking, and thinking as foreign. I went through what I perceived at that

time was an intense experience of culture shock and felt the rejection and anxiety

anyone would experience due to ethnic prejudice. Labeled as a "norteamericano"

or "gringo," I eventually learned that, try as I might, I would never be fully

accepted as Peruvian. For as much as I perfected my language ability and cultural

adaptation, I could never be a native speaker nor Peruvian.

Those three years in Latin America provided me an opportunity to

experience, to a limited extent, some of the struggles that an immigrant nonnative

speaker endures. I now realize, however, that I have come from and returned to a

position of status and education. Because of this, my immigrant-like experience

could never approach the depth or difficulty that most immigrants to the United

States undergo. Even so, the Peruvian years served to heighten my awareness of

culture shock and ethnic prejudice, as well as to increase my sensitivity toward

those who suffer worse experiences. I can only imagine how much more intense

the immigrant experience might be for nonnative English speakers in my own

country. It is widely accepted that, in the United States of 2005, thousands of

women, men, and children continuously confront these same challenges to their

identity and sense of well being as they immigrate and acculturate into the

American way of life. In these times of xenophobia, terrorism, and English-only

politics, immigrant nonnative English speakers face ever-increasing stress,

anxiety, and ethnic prejudice as they strive to become active participants in their

new culture. Moved by empathy for immigrants and a desire to learn from them, I

uncover their experience in the following dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

Little research has been conducted on the effects of ethnic prejudice on

English language learning among immigrants in the United States. Shiels (2001)

contended that ethnic prejudice is one element in a series of factors that can

increase enculturation stress. Krashen's (1985) research has suggested that any

factor that causes anxiety raises the affective filter of the second language learner.

This anxiety results in a slowing or even an interruption in the acquisition of

English by nonnative speakers.

The relationship between ethnic prejudice and English language learning

might extend even further. Hirsch (1987), renowned author, professor, and

Hoover Institution fellow, and Unz (2001), noted legislative lobbyist for English

as the official classroom language, continued to contribute to and promote the

English-only movement overtly exhibiting an ethnic prejudice toward immigrant

speakers. According to Cummins (1986) this movement unwittingly works

against its own goal of promoting English speaking only. This is most evident

when the non-standard accent in the nonnative speakers of English is rejected as

inferior or substandard. In fact, Canale (1983) dismissed the term "standard" for

English speakers, preferring "communicative competence" as the goal of second

language acquisition. To what extent does ethnic prejudice impede the acquisition

of English by nonnative immigrant speakers in the United States?

Polio and Gass (1998) demonstrated that interaction contributes to a native

speaker's comprehension of nonnative speaker's speech. Further, their study

indicated that interaction is essential as a method of improving aural

comprehension and oral production between nonnative and native speakers of

English. Clearly, such interaction is essential to facilitate the language learning

process. However, one factor that impedes social interaction between native

speakers and nonnative speakers is ethnic prejudice. Besides creating anxiety in

the immigrant, ethnic prejudice breaks down the trust, openness, and mutuality

that is part of a healthy, normal conversation (Shiels, 2001). The flow of the

interaction is broken and the tension distracts from the natural process that leads

to developing communicative competence.

Coming from a sociocultural perspective, Alptekin (2002) asserted that

acceptance and tolerance of ethnic diversity are necessary to foster and improve

the acquisition of English by nonnative speakers. In a similar way, Schumann

(1976) had already posited that, when acceptance and tolerance are lacking, a

social distance is created which increases the difficulty of the acculturation and

second language learning. In his research, Schumann studied various factors that

led to social distancing or proximity in the language learning process, which in turn either promotes or slows the immigrant's acquisition of the target language. Clearly the quality and intensity of social interaction are essential to effective second language acquisition (SLA).

Even though the literature has recorded great advances in the interplay between social interaction and second language acquisition, research is still lacking that critically reflects upon the experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice from the viewpoint of the immigrants themselves. The current study documents dialogues in which Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants critically reflect upon their experiences of both ethnic acceptance and prejudice as well as how these affect their English language learning. The researcher anticipates that these critical reflections will enhance the body of knowledge regarding SLA and assist immigrants in claiming their rightful role in the process.

Background and Need for Study

The demography of the San Francisco Bay Area changed dramatically from 1975 to 2000. Prior to that period, Mexican immigration dominated the statistics (State of California, Department of Finance, 2001) regarding the influx of new residents to this region from other countries. An analysis of these population statistics elucidates a changing blend of ethnic and linguistic factors in this region. One important demographic change was the upsurge in the Vietnamese population after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Figure 1 illustrates the comparative increase of Mexican and Vietnamese residents in Santa Clara County, for example, from 1970 to 2000. These two ethnic groups present a

unique and fascinating opportunity to study factors that affect second language

acquisition among immigrants to the United States.
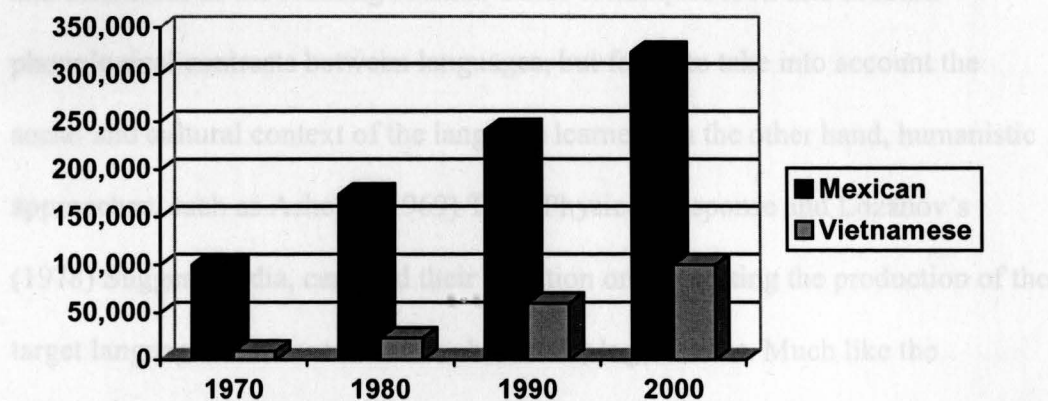
Figure 1. Population figures in Santa Clara County by race/ethnicity.[1]

[1]Adapted from *Current Population Survey Report*, March 2002 Data: California State Department of Finance,

Demographic Research Unit.

        SLA theories have focused their attention upon the physiological,

psychological, and sociological aspects of language acquisition among nonnative

speakers (Chomsky, 1965; Krashen, 1985; Skinner, 1957). Celce-Murcia and

Olshtain (2000) divided English as a Second Language (ESL) methods into three

categories or schools of thought: comprehension, production, and

humanistic/psychosuggestive. Comprehension based techniques, such as Krashen

and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach, encouraged the student to have a silent

time during initial phases of acquisition to absorb elements of the new language

without feeling obligated to produce that same language. This particular approach

seems most suited to the context of the Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants in

the Bay Area.

In contrast, production based methods, such as Lado's (1957) Audio-Lingual Pedagogy, focused on the formal linguistic elements in eliciting sounds and utterances in the learning of ESL. These techniques took into account phonological contrasts between languages, but failed to take into account the social and cultural context of the language learner. On the other hand, humanistic approaches, such as Asher's (1969) Total Physical Response and Lozanov's (1978) Suggestopedia, centered their attention on connecting the production of the target language with contextual or phenomenological cues. Much like the production based methods, these techniques approached ESL learning from the viewpoint of the dominant culture as opposed to the immigrant's home culture.

This study related certain sociological factors to the ease with which a nonnative speaker could acquire English. Krashen (1985) pointed to anxiety as a factor that increased the affective filter of the second language (L2) learner. He found that an increased anxiety level in the nonnative speaker resulted in a higher affective filter that blocked the language acquisition process. His study claimed that, by lowering their anxiety, immigrants could improve and facilitate their language acquisition. Spielberger (1976) defined anxiety as "the intensity of the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry that are experienced by an individual at a particular moment, and by heightened activity of the autonomic nervous system that accompanies these feelings" (p. 5). Research about factors that lead to anxiety, culture shock, and enculturation stress is extremely useful in promoting English language learning among immigrants (Adler, 1972; Berry, 1987; Krashen, 1985; Shiels, 2001). Therefore, this study

centers on the effect of ethnic prejudice upon the affective filter of the nonnative speaker.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985) referred to the impact of emotional states on SLA. In his 1981 study, Krashen discovered that those who were more self-assured and highly motivated had a tendency to progress more in SLA than those with low self-esteem and motivation. In addition, his research suggested that a pupil's anxiety level greatly affected the amount and speed of second language development. When anxiety was lowered, the learner was more comfortable and less pressured. This allowed messages to flow more naturally for processing and resulted in increased and more rapid language acquisition. This study further examined stressful experiences that immigrants attributed to ethnic prejudice and explored how that same factor influenced their acquisition of English.

Allport (1954) defined ethnic prejudice as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization" (p. 13). This antipathy is felt, observed, or sensed by the immigrant and, in turn, increases his or her anxiety level. Such prejudice may be directed at a group or individual merely because he or she is of that group. Sometimes ethnic prejudice is overt, but more often it is of a covert nature (Kinder & Sanders, 1996). In order to uncover the ethnic prejudice experienced by nonnative English speakers, it is advantageous to learn from the immigrants themselves the nature of this experiential phenomenon.

Because of the political sensitivity surrounding terms relating to ethnicity and race, researchers have only recently begun to address this anxiety-causing

issue (Macedo, 2000). This trend has motivated the present researcher to describe those experiences of ethnic prejudice that may have an impact on the anxiety level of the language learner. The researcher conducted in-depth participatory dialogues with Mexican and Vietnamese men and women. He probed experiences of ethnic prejudice from the perspective of these nonnative speakers of English.

The experience of both the Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants is one of documented marginalization and struggle. Much like African Americans, these two ethnic groups experience a double consciousness or cultural tension of being an outsider-within in the process of enculturation. Ladson-Billings (2000) asserted, "DuBois's notion of double consciousness applies not only to African Americans but to any people who are constructed outside of the dominant paradigm" (p. 260). Her comment addressed the importance of hearing from the immigrants themselves their own experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice as well as the Mexican and Vietnamese interpretation of the effect these have had upon their SLA.

In summary, as more immigrants arrive in the Santa Clara Valley, the need for increased attention to issues of SLA becomes more urgent. One particularly sensitive factor in SLA is ethnic prejudice and how it impacts the process of acquiring English among these immigrants. Further, since the researcher is neither an immigrant nor a nonnative speaker, this study examined the perceived effect of ethnic prejudice on SLA from the perspective of the nonnative immigrant. The research elicited information from both men and women who are from two distinct cultures of origin, Vietnamese and Mexican. In selecting such contrasting

and diverse cultural worldviews, the researcher anticipated enriching the body of knowledge concerning the influence that ethnic prejudice has had upon anxiety levels among immigrants. Finally, this study may assist in promoting a wider understanding, acceptance, and openness to varied viewpoints regarding the immigrant experience of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation into an English-speaking environment.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored immigrants' critical reflections of the way native speakers treat nonnative speakers of English by dialoging with the participants and documenting their experiences of acceptance and prejudice as well as how these factors have affected their learning of English. It also investigated, from the perspective of the immigrants, what native and nonnative English speakers can do to help lower the anxiety for new speakers of the English language. In so doing, native speakers can assist the immigrant to achieve the goal of second language acquisition and communicative competence. It is critical that native English speakers address the issues of ethnic prejudice and cultural conflict if they are to promote the learning of English as a second language among immigrants.

Research Questions

Because this study had at its focus the experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice in English language learning among immigrants and their own critical reflection upon these experiences, the following research questions formed the nucleus of its inquiry:

1. What are some nonnative English speakers' experiences regarding the way native speakers treat them?

2. How have nonnative English speakers' experiences of ethnic acceptance or ethnic prejudice affected their learning of English?

3. What do nonnative English speakers think they need in order to lower their anxiety as they learn a new language?

4. What can native English speakers do to lower nonnative speakers' anxiety?

5. What can nonnative English speakers do to lower their anxiety with native English speakers?

Theoretical Rationale

As recorded in the statement of the problem, previous research has traced the relationship between social interaction and SLA (Alptekin, 2002; Krashen, 1985; Schumann, 1976). These three theorists serve as research grounding for the theoretical rationale of this study. Although they approach language learning from three different perspectives, Alptekin, Krashen, and Schumann all have focused their attention on one crucial element that needs further research: the interplay between social interaction and SLA among immigrants.

Alptekin (2002) centered his concern on the goal of language learning by developing the concept of intercultural communicative competence. This notion combines sociocultural aims with linguistic ends to produce one integrative idea of language learning that communicates effectively across cultures and languages. In contract, Krashen viewed the natural approach as the optimal means of

language acquisition. Combined with his input hypothesis, Krashen's (1983) natural approach considered conversation as the primary vehicle of comprehension and production. Finally, Schumann (1976) envisioned social proximity or distance as playing a crucial role in language learning because it suggests the quality of interaction that can occur between speaker and listener. According to his theory, the greater the social distance between native and nonnative speakers, for example, the more difficult or slower the language acquisition. In spite of the diverse perspectives from which these researchers approached language learning, all three have demonstrated the crucial role that acceptance or rejection, ease or anxiety play in the areas of immigrants' language learning experience.

The present research centered upon the immigrant speakers of English and their critical reflections on the verbal and nonverbal expressions of acceptance and prejudice toward them. Freire's (1973) critical, problem-solving pedagogy provided the rationale from which the present study interpreted the data. He developed an epistemology that reflected upon the learner's experience situated within a social context. This dialectic process helped identify the degree and intensity of the acceptance and prejudice as perceived by immigrant English speakers. In Freire's (1970) analysis of human learning, the participant was a subject of his or her own history because that person read and named the world. "Dialogue, as the encounter among men [sic] to 'name' the world, is a fundamental precondition for their true humanization" (p. 137).

Lippi-Green (1997) asserted that ethnic prejudice is situated within the interaction between nonnative and native English speakers. The dialogue that was the context of this study required a critical approach to unveil the fuller effect of ethnic prejudice on English language acquisition (Freire, 1970). For Freire, all human activity involved theory and practice, as well as reflection and action. Furthermore, he clearly warned that, "No one can, however, unveil the world *for* [author's emphasis] another" (p. 169).

By listening to the participant's interpretation of his or her experience, the researcher was conscienticized about the world of the immigrant with all its struggles and complexities (Freire, 1970). These experiences included the perception of ethnic prejudice based upon foreign accent, skin color, personal hygiene, dress, gestures, and eye contact. In Freire's framework, dialogue played a key role in the communicative process between teacher and learner. "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking," claimed Freire, "is also capable of generating critical thinking" (p. 92). In this study, the researcher took the position of learner by listening to the immigrant and his or her reading of the world of ethnic prejudice. In addition, the immigrant had the freedom to interpret how that perceived acceptance and prejudice have affected his or her own English language learning. In this rationale, the interviews or dialogues had as their goal interactive communication that leads to intercultural understanding.

The immigrants' experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice shaped and adjusted the lens through which they interpreted American reality. Just as any human being, the immigrant is in "constant relationship to the world" (Freire,

1973, p.146). Thus, the participant's perception, previous experience, judgment, and worldview helped to interpret the data of the phenomenon of prejudice in terms that name that reality in an ethnically appropriate way.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study was conducted in a single, urban county in the state of California that is unique in its immigration patterns. The data entailed qualitative information resulting from dialogues with six individuals from only two countries of origin, Mexico and Vietnam, even though the county's population includes a great diversity of ethnic groups from around the world. The experiences investigated were particular to only these individuals and cultures. Therefore, the conclusions were necessarily limited to the context from which they were taken and could not be generalizeable to the greater immigrant population in any quantitative way. Nevertheless, the investigation of immigrant experiences provided a rich, descriptive, critical view of the types of factors involved in nonnative English language learning in a multicultural environment.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher was limited in regard to differences in his experience of the two ethnic groups in this study. Although he has traveled extensively in Mexico, he has never set foot in Vietnam. In addition, even though the dialogues took place in English, it is important to note that the researcher is fluent in Spanish, but only knows a few phrases in Vietnamese. These differences in cultural experience

may have influenced his interpretation of the data presented by the six

participants. The researcher may have relied too much on his experience with the

Mexican immigrants and obscured the interpretation of their dialogues. In the

same vein, he might have misinterpreted Vietnamese immigrant dialogues due to

limited previous social interaction with their culture. Therefore, the researcher had

to take care to verify his interpretation of the data through the input and review of

the participants themselves.

Significance of the Study

This research adds further understanding of the immigrant experience of

ethnic acceptance and prejudice, as well as points to the perceived influence these

experiences have on English language learning. The interactive nature of the

participatory dialogues lends itself to an in-depth examination of factors that

increase or decrease anxiety in the immigrants and may contribute to or detract

from the language learning process. Finally, this research aimed to carry forward

the search for knowledge about enculturation stresses and how they have affected

the acquisition of English among immigrants.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter of the study reviews primary and secondary sources in past

research literature that served as a foundation for interpreting the experiences of

ethnic acceptance and prejudice among Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants

striving to learn English in Santa Clara County, California. This review of the

literature consists of four sections: second language acquisition, ethnic prejudice,

critical pedagogy, and special issues in second language acquisition. The first two

sections investigate various theories and perspectives on the two dependent

variables of the study, second language acquisition and ethnic prejudice. The third

section illustrates the critical, theoretical rationale by means of which the data

were interpreted. The fourth section highlights issues in second language

acquisition that are key factors contributing to ethnic acceptance or prejudice.

Finally, the summary draws connections between these four sections of the

literature based upon the phenomenon of human social interaction.

Theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

During the 20th century, linguists developed various theories of second

language acquisition (Chomsky, 1965; Krashen, 1985; Long, 1985; McLaughlin,

1987; Skinner, 1957). Each of these theories has furthered linguistic

understanding of the factors involved in the acquisition of English by nonnative

speakers. Since the present study investigated the immigrants' reflections on the

effect of ethnic acceptance and prejudice upon immigrant English language

learning, the researcher described the theoretical approaches to second language acquisition. The various theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can be divided into three general schools of thought: behaviorist, nativist or innatist, and functional.

Behaviorist Theories

The behaviorist theory of language acquisition supports the notion that humans acquire language through the senses as a response to a stimulus in the environment much as animals learn behaviors through training. Skinner (1957), one of the chief proponents of this approach, developed the notion of operant conditioning. By this term, he referred to the way in which a human being emits a response without necessarily observing stimuli. Building upon Skinner's concept of operant conditioning, behaviorist theorists proposed that, in order to maintain newly acquired language, one must receive ongoing reinforcement (Asher 1969; Lozanov, 1978; Schuster, et. al., 1976).

This particular school of language acquisition fostered the idea that language could be learned through repetition and constant stimuli, such as listening to audio tapes of the target language. In the historical context of post-World War II redevelopment and cold war politics, Audio Lingual Pedagogy (Lado, 1957) flourished as a medium of instruction for military personnel who were employed for purposes of national defense, foreign espionage, or infiltration of anti-democratic movements within the United States and around the globe. This same effort served as a testing ground for high school foreign language

curricula that abounded in the decades following World War II. By rigorous,

disciplined training of aural comprehension and oral sound production, these

behaviorist techniques yielded some positive results in speaking and listening

skills in a foreign language.

Innatist Theories

The innatist second language acquisition theory underscores the evidence

of an innate ability in infants and children to decipher and decode language.

Chomsky (1965), a linguist within this school, supported the notion of a Language

Acquisition Device (LAD), an inborn element of each human being that aids in

the formulation of patterns of words and concepts. McNeill (1966) indicated that

LAD consists of four innate linguistics properties: (a) the ability to distinguish

speech sounds from others in the environment, (b) the ability to organize

linguistic data into various classes that can later be refined, (c) the knowledge that

only a certain kind of linguistic system is possible and that other kinds are not,

and d) the ability to engage in constant evaluation of the developing linguistic

system so as to construct the simplest possible system of the available linguistic

input.

Chomsky (1968) further developed his theory by positing the notion of

Universal Grammar (UG). This innate structure allows the child to decipher

language and organize information into meaningful phrases and utterances found

in one's cultural context so that any language might be acquired when

encountered in the developmental years. Linguists have continued to research UG

and its relationship to language learning since Chomsky first theorized about it.

White (1989) discussed the limited applicability of UG to SLA in her work,

although other linguists have accepted the value of this concept in analyzing the

process of SLA (Birdsong, 1999; Gasser, 1990; Major, 2001).

As an innatist, Krashen (1985) developed a model later called the input

hypothesis, which is really five interrelated hypotheses. These are (a) acquisition-

learning, (b) monitor, (c) natural order, (d) input, and (e) affective filter. Krashen

claims that adults have two distinct means of internalizing a language, an intuitive

or subconscious means called acquisition and a conscious process called learning.

The monitor referred to above is a device used only for correcting errors in

learning as Krashen defines it. The natural order refers to the hypothesis that

people acquire language rules in a predictable natural order. Then, there is the

hypothesis of the input an acquirer can handle defined as $i + 1$, that is, one new

input at a time. Finally, the affective filter must be low so as to allow acquisition

to occur in a less impeded fashion, i.e., reduced anxiety, etc.

Krashen (1985) insisted that language acquisition draws upon intuitive or

subconscious devices that are innate in the human person. Hence, the nonnative

speaker has a built-in monitor to self-correct when appropriate. The new English

speaker, for example, can draw upon this ability to become more competent in the

target language. Over-correction or imposed correction from outside may frustrate

this naturally occurring device. Similarly, nonnative speakers can improve their

acquisition of a second language by tapping into the natural order for acquiring a

language that is already part of their makeup as a human being. Changing this

natural order may lead to frustration, anxiety, and loss of self-confidence. In short,

all of these hypotheses have practical applications to language acquisition among

nonnative speakers.

Cognitive Theories

As a cognitive linguist, McLaughlin (1987) presented the attention-

processing model. This theory of second language acquisition distinguished

between focal and peripheral attention to formal properties of language by the

adult. McLaughlin saw a continuum of attention in which less or more attention is

paid to the task at hand, that is, either focusing centrally or on the periphery.

Rather than define attention in terms such as conscious and subconscious,

McLaughlin emphasized the processing of information and the level of attention

given to it as either more focal or more peripheral. This reflects more accurately

the human experience described by modern developmental psychology (Fodor,

1983; Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978) and allows for the variations that occur in

human learning processes. Finally, by further subdividing attention processing

into controlled and automatic categories, McLaughlin set up four quadrants that

plot quite accurately the range of learners as they progress through the continuum

of SLA.

Each of these four quadrants examines the performance of the language

learners in a particular setting. For example, if learners are in a test situation, they

pay more focal attention in processing the information and do so in a more

automatic way. In contrast, when one assesses the performance of language

learners in a communication or dialogue setting, the attention is more peripheral

than the exam situation, but still a rather automatic processing mechanism is

employed. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between these four elements of

McLaughlin's (1987) attention-processing model.

Attention to Formal Properties of Language	Information Processing	
	Controlled	Automatic
Focal	(Quadrant 1) Performance based on formal rule learning	(Quadrant 2) Performance in a test situation
Peripheral	(Quadrant 3) Performance based on implicit learning or analogic learning	(Quadrant 4) Performance in communication situations

Figure 2. McLaughlin's attention-processing model is diagrammed in four quadrants.

Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach is a set of classroom

techniques and a philosophy of second language acquisition. However,

McLaughlin's (1987) Attention-Processing Model has one advantage over the

natural approach because it reflects more accurately what modern psychology has

taught about learning modalities and processing of information (Piaget, 1973).

Furthermore, the attention-processing model is much more useful in

sociolinguistics because it is not as dualistic in its analysis of the human person,

avoiding the dichotomizing of human experience into conscious or subconscious.

In addition, unlike Krashen and Terrell's approach, it is clear to understand how

McLaughlin's approach allows for the impact of social interaction as a means of

moving through the continuum from the focal and controlled to the peripheral and

automatic use of rules and other aids. This appears to more accurately describe the

adult experience of second language acquisition.

Constructivist Theories

Social constructivists consider language acquisition a result of several

factors that are ultimately dependent upon socialization and usage to balance the

interplay between acquired and innate learning. Researchers began to recognize

that language was one manifestation of the cognitive and affective ability to deal

with the world, with others, and with the self (McLaughlin, 1987; Vygotsky,

1978). In addition, this theory strives to get at the functional levels of meaning

constructed through social interaction. Long (1985, 1996) promoted his

Interaction Hypothesis that built upon Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis. In this

theory, Long contended that interaction, as well as input, is a major factor in the

process of SLA. Drawing heavily from Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal

development, social constructivists theorize that learners actually construct their

new language as mediated by social interaction. Furthermore, Fillmore (1993)

pointed out the important roles that teachers, parents, and the entire community

play in helping children develop their second language in a multicultural

environment. In short, social constructivists consider not only the individual

language learner in the process of SLA, but also the social context in which the learner interacts.

Ethnic Prejudice

The focus of this section of the literature review is ethnic prejudice toward immigrants who are learning English as a Second Language. This entails an analysis of pertinent literature that deals with U.S. immigrant ethnicity as well as prejudice toward members of U.S. ethnic groups. In order to grasp the position that ethnicity has in the literature, it is necessary to review critical race theories as well as anthropological theories of the differences among the immigrants' cultures of origin. As points of contrast, these two approaches help ground the review of literature on ethnicity to follow.

Frequently, the native speaker of English associates or labels the nonnative speaker as belonging to a certain group, possibly assuming a particular racial categorization such as Black, Hispanic, or Asian (De Vos & Romanucci-Ross, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 1996; Olsen, 1997; Spring, 2000; Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M., 2002). Such a judgment is based not only on present sensory data such as foreign accent and skin color, but also on past experiential knowledge as well as acquired knowledge of the particular ethnic group in general. The native speaker judges that the nonnative English speaker belongs to a certain group other than his or her own based upon these perceived differences (Spickard & Burroughs, 2000).

When researchers focused upon the verbal and nonverbal expressions of prejudice toward immigrant speakers of English, they observed several aspects of

the experience that affect the degree and intensity of the prejudice. These aspects

included but were not limited to foreign accent, skin color, personal hygiene,

dress, gestures, and eye contact (Lippi-Green, 1997; Spickard & Burroughs,

2000). Based on these factors, the white native speaker makes a typical choice to

interpret the nonnative English speaker as belonging to a certain group other than

his or her own.

Many white native English speakers make generalizations about the

immigrants whom they observe: if they have a Spanish accent, they must be

Mexican; if they have angular eyes, they must be Chinese or Vietnamese; if they

have black skin, they must be African American (Lippi-Green, 1997; Nieto, 1996;

Olsen, 1997; Spring, 2000; Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M., 2002).

Some make simplistic judgments because they lack categories with which they

might describe what is foreign to them, thereby making errors in their judgment

due to lack of prior knowledge. All of these factors contribute to an atmosphere or

culture of intolerance of anyone who is not part of one's own race, ethnicity,

class, or social group. Furthermore, by focusing on the differences in the

immigrant, the native English speaker tends to prefer his or her own group to that

of the foreigner.

What can one make of all this? Does a person therefore attribute such

prejudice to racism or shall one call it ethnic prejudice? The terms are indicative

of an epistemology that chooses to view and know the American experience

through lenses of ethnicity or of race. Ladson-Billings (2000) posited that,

"Epistemology is linked intimately to worldview" (p. 258).

Still, the difficulty is that both of these terms have historical applications that are less than desirable. On the one hand, racial prejudice connotes a stance that criticizes White American domination and control of the African-American people. On the other, ethnic prejudice appears to attribute intergroup differences to the category of cultural elements totally separated from one's skin color and group struggle. Perhaps, some middle ground can be achieved by recognizing the contribution of critical race theory to the analysis of the cross-cultural tension that immigrants experience in the United States. As Ladson-Billings (2000) suggested, "DuBois's notion of double consciousness applies not only to African Americans but to any people who are constructed outside of the dominant paradigm" (p. 260). Therefore, when addressing the reality of the immigrant Mexican, Vietnamese, or any other ethnic group, the researcher must take into account this shared experience of double consciousness to interpret the nuances of ethnic prejudice.

Omi and Winant (1994) proposed a model in which racial formation becomes the basis of a new analysis. They reported that, "Many blacks (and later, many Latinos, Indians, and Asian Americans as well) rejected *ethnic* identity in favor of a more radical *racial* identity which demanded group rights and recognition" (p. 20). Most certainly, one must take into account the experience of an individual's group in order to more fully understand how she perceives and knows the world. If such an individual's social group has been oppressed for centuries, then her worldview is one of separation, struggle, disempowerment, and hopelessness. This type of experience shapes and adjusts the lens through which

she interprets American reality. Therefore, to understand her social group, one must understand its history as well.

Still other theorists would prefer to distinguish among the types of immigrants or minorities in the United States. Ogbu and Simons (1994) distinguished between African Americans and other minorities who immigrated at a later time in history and under different circumstances. They defined such distinctions as involuntary versus voluntary minorities. In their paradigm, an involuntary minority indicates persons who are members of an ethnic minority that immigrated to the United States under duress or obligation, such as the Africans who were enslaved and forced to come to work on the plantations in the South.

In contrast to this notion, Ogbu and Simons (1994) used the term voluntary minority to refer to persons who choose to come to America for personal, economic, or career purposes, without external obligation or force, such as the Italian-Americans in the early 20th Century. This clarification is useful in recognizing the psychological and political factors that motivated or obligated the immigration of nonnative speakers to the United States. However, Warren (1990) and Wilson (2003) warned of the discriminatory nature of these distinctions when they fail to take into account other social and cultural factors (e.g., class) that affect learning among immigrants and minorities

In choosing an appropriate term to grasp or describe the phenomenon of intolerance or rejection that the nonnative English speaker experiences, one must consider his or her self-identified socio-political affiliation. Does the immigrant

see herself as Salvadoran or Hispanic, Asian or Korean, Filipino American or

Pinoy? As Anzaldúa (1987) illustrated, "The new *mestiza* copes by developing a

tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 79). In order to grasp

the depth of the inner struggle for identity, the immigrant herself must give voice

to that experience, that *lucha*. The self-perception of the nonnative English

speaker assisted in the interpretation of his or her experience of prejudice,

intolerance, rejection, and anxiety. This is the advantage and critical stance that

participatory research brings to bear on the discussion of prejudice, whether it is

ethnic or racial. The participant's perception, previous experience, judgment, and

worldview help interpret the data of the phenomenon of prejudice in appropriate

ethnic and/or racial terms.

    Omi and Winant (1994) asserted, "A racial project can be defined as *racist*

if and only if it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on*

essentialist categories of race [emphasis author's]" (p. 71). This points to those

researchers who mistakenly interpreted color differences as biological or genetic

levels of superiority based upon pseudoscientific analysis (Spickard & Burroughs,

2000). In the twenty-first century, the turn is toward a more holistic analysis of

the interplay of ethnic groups in the process of globalization and postmodern

development. Spickard and Burroughs observed, "New and increasing patterns of

social relationships between groups, to the point of intergroup mating and

marriage in the United States and elsewhere, have contributed to the sense of

intergroup connectedness and multiethnicity" (p. 14).

Ethnicity, then, better than race, captures the perceived psychological, social, and cultural differences between nonnative and native English speakers. Spickard and Burroughs (2000) contended that the, "use of the term 'ethnicity' may be most appropriate when the focus is on understanding group processes" (p. 7). Since the process of language acquisition necessarily involves interaction between two or more people, it would appear that ethnic differences rather than racial are integrally related to experiences of prejudice. However, one must be careful not to presume a causal relationship between ethnicity and prejudice, but rather strive to conceptualize the context of the interaction from a cultural perspective (Geertz, 2000). For the purposes of this study, ethnicity refers to the qualities of a social group that share a common set of beliefs, values, language, worldview, and mores (Spring, 2000).

As Ladson-Billings (2000) stated, "…the individual's existence (and knowledge) is contingent upon relationship with others" (p. 257). Her epistemological viewpoint is particularly cogent in reflecting upon the interaction between nonnative and native English speakers. The immigrants struggle to adjust to the new context and yet somehow do not fit in. Without the acceptance of the native speaker, the new English speaker will be frustrated. That is why Ladson-Billings (2000) proclaimed, "…the truth required a community of listeners" (p. 238). This perspective of listening to the experience of the immigrant is essential to give voice to the truth about ethnic prejudice.

Because ethnic identification plays a role in the immigrant's feelings of rejection or acceptance, the process of English language learning needs to take

ethnicity into account. The immigrants have left one group to become part of a new group, only to find that they belong to neither. As Ladson-Billings (2000) intimated, "Belonging yet not belonging presents peculiar challenges" (p. 3). She continued to reflect upon her experience that echoes that of the immigrant and claimed that she was an "outsider within." Ladson-Billings' marginal or liminal experience as an African-American woman parallels that of the immigrant Mexican or Vietnamese English learner: they are all "outsiders within." The immigrants' struggle for self-identity and ethnic identity has created such a dichotomy, along with its accompanying tension. It is particularly in the midst of these struggles that one can unveil experiences of ethnic prejudice (Suárez-Orozco, C. & Suárez-Orozco, M., 2002).

Anzaldúa (1987) envisioned a new social order in which "Our role is to link people with each other---the Blacks with Jews with Indians with Asians with whites with extraterrestrials. It is to transfer ideas and information from one culture to another" (pp. 106-107). In examining the cultural shifting that has occurred among Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants in Santa Clara County, one can observe the extensive need for social interaction to facilitate the transition from one culture to the new culture. Furthermore, this cultural interface encourages the confrontation of ethnic prejudice that may very well inhibit English language learning.

De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1975) recognized that "...ethnicity has become an important issue in modern states because of the ethnic interpenetration that has resulted from increasing social modality (related to individual

achievement) and from increasing geographic mobility (due to shifting markets for labor)" (pp. 6-7). In simple terms, ethnicity is an issue that has and will continue to play a major role in the life adjustments of immigrants. In particular, ethnic prejudice and acceptance continue to remain issues of concern in the lives of immigrant English language learners.

Critical Pedagogy

In this section the researcher reviews literature that has developed critical pedagogy as a tool for interpreting and reflecting upon the world of the immigrant who encounters experiences of ethnic prejudice and acceptance while learning English. This methodological approach to the phenomenon of cross-cultural literacy is particularly appropriate because it has been rooted in reflection upon literacy programs. These pedagogical experiences have helped point out the interrelatedness of social contextualization and language learning.

Social Contextualization

In one of his later works, Freire (1992) stressed the connection between learning theories, "The great leap that we learn to take has been to work not precisely on the *innate*, nor only on the *acquired*, but on the relationship between the two" (p. 97). His insight underscored the importance of the social context in which one learns language as a grounding of those innate and acquired aspects of language learning. For example, if the context is one of acceptance, respect, and mutuality, language learning is enhanced. On the other hand, if the social context is one of rejection, prejudice, and duality, language learning is stifled. As Freire

further asserted "Cultural pluralism consists in the *realization* [author's emphasis] of freedom, in the *guaranteed* [author's emphasis] right of each culture to move in mutual respect, each one freely running the risk of being different, fearless of being different, each culture being 'for itself'" (p. 156). This realization is the creation of an openness and willingness on the part of native speakers to accept and encourage immigrants in the process of SLA.

In Freire's (1973) framework the society and culture in which one lives played a key role in the acquisition of language. To that end, he developed a methodology to promote literacy in Brazil which drew from the concepts, perceptions, and daily experiences of the working class and peasants. The basis of the technique was the culture circle in which the participants critically reflected upon situations depicted in drawings from everyday life. The elements of the situations provided the social context from which the people could learn key words, concepts, and ideas in circles of peers from the same cultural milieu in Brazil, usually in a rural or agrarian setting. Freire pointed out, "...the participants arrive at the distinction between two worlds: that of nature and that of culture" (p. 63). In essence, the drawings were actually representations of the social context of village and farm life familiar to the members of the culture circles.

Reading the World

For Freire (1992), reading the world was an essential component of the process of conscientization. Even from his earliest writings, Freire (1973) insisted that the role of the teacher was to facilitate the interpretation of the learners'

experiences, to encourage the critical reflection upon their past so as to plan for their future. By the term "reading the world," Freire intended a critical, dialogic review of the events and the people who participated in them so as to achieve authentic humanization (Freire, 1970). In this study, "reading the world" of the Mexican and Vietnamese immigrant is a shared encounter, a dialogic interaction between the researcher and the participants. Together they interpreted or read the world of ethnic prejudice and acceptance. In intercultural communication these immigrants unveiled the factors that have either promoted or detracted from their English language acquisition. Through collaboration, the researcher and the immigrants have recommended methods for fostering ethnic understanding, tolerance, and acceptance that may reduce the anxiety of the enculturation experience. Because of the importance of the participant's role, Freire (1970) eloquently concluded, "...dialogical theory requires that the world be unveiled. No one can, however, unveil the world *for* [author's emphasis] another" (p. 169).

Speaking and Listening

Human dialogue involves both speaking and listening. Freire (1970) claimed that to enter into a critical dialogue one must have an authentic love for people. By this he meant that the teacher needed to place his or her faith in the people who were learning, to trust the process of critical dialogue that entailed reflecting on their experiences and their interpretations of those same experiences. Otherwise the dialogue can become "a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation" (p.91). In contrast, an authentic, loving dialogue ought to strive to 'name' the world, to articulate the meaning of the experiences, as a

way to help humanize both teacher and learner in the process. Ultimately, Freire

(1992) clarified that it is not permissible under any conditions for the teacher to

impose his or her own 'reading of the world" on the learners.

Reflection and Action

The key to authentically critical pedagogy is the process that moves the

dialogue from sharing the experiences through reflection and on to action. From

his earliest writing, Freire (1970) insisted, "...problem-posing theory and practice

take the people's history as their starting point" (p.84). His dialectic method is

rooted in real, human history embedded in a cultural milieu that shapes and

flavors that same history. The next movement requires the creativity to reflect

upon that same named reality with an inquisitive view toward social

transformation (Freire, 1970). This process entails the quality of dialogue that

poses problems and generates themes that motivate and foster innovative

solutions to liberate and transform. In matter of fact terms, Freire (1970)

announced that "human activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action"

(p. 125).

Participation in this dialogic process transforms the speaker and the

listener, the teacher and the learner. The critical reflection involved in such

dialogue takes shape through action for change. The immigrant and the native

alike interact and are transformed in the process. As Freire (1970) so succinctly

put it " a climate of hope and confidence develops which leads men [sic] to

attempt to overcome the limit-situations" (p. 99). These limit-situations are very

similar to Vygotsky's (1978) zones of proximal development. In Vygotsky's

analysis of child development, the learner needed to step into the zone of

proximal development to move forward in the learning process. Once a new task

is accomplished, once new knowledge is achieved, the learner resets his or her

zone or limit-situation. Thus, the process of actualization, humanization,

transformation, or simply learning involves the constant redefining or resetting of

themes, goals, or experiences upon which one might critically reflect.

Special Issues in Second Language Acquisition

As a result of reviewing the literature on various sociolinguistic factors in

second language acquisition, the researcher discovered several cogent issues

related to immigrants. This section will develop these themes more thoroughly

and illuminate their relationship with the topic at hand, i.e., the role of ethnic

acceptance and prejudice in immigrant English language learning. In a very

general way, the sources reinforced the researcher's curiosity regarding the

factors of ethnic acceptance and prejudice. In a more specific way the literature

clarified, defined, and heightened the understanding of key concepts in the

discussion of immigrant language learning.

The very nature of the speaking and listening process involves

communicative interaction between human beings. Hymes (1964) developed the

terminology of communicative competence to describe the phenomenon of

speaker and listener comprehending one another. This has been a particularly

useful concept in the field of interactional sociolinguistics because it stressed

competence rather than fluency as the goal of communication. As Schiffrin (1996) indicated, "People's perceptions of similarities and differences in the world, including their predispositions about language and the way it is used, are culturally bound" (p. 313). These tendencies and customs influence the communicative competence of both native and nonnative speakers alike.

Such ability to communicate effectively is empowering for the speakers of any language. Gumperz (1990) posited, "Communication is power in modern postindustrial society" (p.223). The native as well as the nonnative speakers can claim such power if they achieve communicative competence in their speaking and listening. Their communicative ability shapes the quality of the interaction and frames the dialogue within their particular social context. The interplay between native and nonnative speakers creates a new sort of English and embellishes the language with cultural cues and flavor in their particular speech community (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). Instead of viewing language as standard or non-standard, Kachru and Nelson pointed to a distinctive form of the language that breaks the barriers of the older concepts of that same language. As they indicated so clearly, "The substantive issue of language identity becomes bound up with the new pairing of a language and a culture that yields a distinctive communicative competence for the speakers of, for example, a new English" (p. 89).

Erickson (1996) coined the term comembership to denote "the sharing of attitudes of social identity that were distinctive as commonalities relevant in the situation at hand" (p. 295). This comembership captured the notion of the

interactive nature of dialogue and how it can enhance the language of both native

and nonnative speakers. Erickson used ethnographical microanalysis to grapple

with this interplay and to grasp the uniqueness of the dialogical nature of

language:

> Ethnographic microanalysis of interaction, with its awareness of the situatedness and partial flexibility of social identity (especially with regard to the phenomenon of situational comembership), can help in understanding how the usual border conditions for culture differences can be locally reframed to some extent as boundary conditions within an immediate situation. (pp. 302-303)

Hence, the face-to-face interaction of dialogue serves as a locus to study ethnic

differences and similarities, as well as their influence upon both native and

nonnative communicative competence.

The study of ethnic acceptance and prejudice among immigrant English

learners falls within the scope of interactional sociolinguistics. Schiffrin (1996)

clearly delineated the realm of this discipline as "the study of the linguistic and

social construction of interaction" (p. 316). Schiffrin went on to assert that

interactional sociolinguistics "provides a framework within which to analyze

social context and to incorporate participants' own understanding of context into

the inferencing of meaning" (p. 316). This framework is the same design chosen

in this study of Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants in Santa Clara County that

empowers the participants to interpret and dialogue about the meaning of their

experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice while they learn English. In short,

the participants and the researcher together engage in what could be termed

critical discourse analysis.

Similarly, Lippi-Green (1997) challenged the typical approaches that linguists have taken in the past when looking at variation in American English speech. She pointed out an underlying ideology that many Americans espouse that would proscribe a standard dialect for all English speakers. Lippi-Green stated, "It is interesting to note that there is little debate at all about who sets the standards for spoken and written language, standards which have been the focus of legislations, standards which affect our everyday lives" (p. 6). The author continued on to reinforce the tenet of linguistics that *all living languages change.* "Sociolinguists have established beyond a doubt that variation is an intrinsic and inseparable feature of the spoken language" (p. 39).

This variation, such as accent, is only one factor that clouds the literacy discussion. Another is the role of the listener in the communication. Lippi-Green (1997) emphasized, "The variety of the language spoken cannot predict the effectiveness of the message, but it can predict some of the social evaluation the listener brings to the message, and his or her willingness to listen" (p. 18). Lippi-Green even purported that "Accent has little to do with what is generally called *communicative competence* [author's emphasis]" (p. 48). Rather, for her, language was socially constructed as a means of expressing ourselves and interpreting one's world. Indeed, the author made it clear that, even though accent plays a role in distancing people from one another, it does not account for the communication difficulty as much as do "negative social evaluation of the accent in question, and a rejection of the communicative burden" (p. 71). In Lippi-Green's point of view, native speakers have used their "language ideology filters"

to categorize or judge the quality or standard of the nonnative speaker's English. Thus, accent has become a litmus test for exclusion, an excuse to turn away, to refuse to recognize the other.

From a different point of view, Major (2001) envisioned second language acquisition (SLA) as a process with interlanguage as an interim language of the nonnative speaker. The immigrant then needs to move out of his or her zone to apply universal grammar (UG) to new situations to verify if they function in the target language. This constant "stepping out of the zone" is what moves the individual toward second language fluency and diminishes the production of foreign accent that can cause native speakers to perceive the speaker as different. At times, the native speaker's perception of foreign accent could foster the development of attitudes of ethnic prejudice.

Major's (2001) Ontogeny Phylogeny Model (OPM) included the element he labeled phylogeny to take into account the "language contact phenomena" that affect the interlanguage of the nonnative speakers. His approach viewed foreign accent as a matter of production and perception that has changed the communication between native and nonnative speakers. Both have a role in overcoming the difficulties that foreign accent can cause in the communicative competence between them. From a social interactionist perspective, it is essential to place the burden of communicative competence on both the listener and the speaker to assist one another in the process of moving from interlanguage to a level of speech variation that attains a shared, spoken literacy.

Major (2001) claimed, "NSs have variable competence" (p. 98). When people reflect on regional and dialectal differences in spoken English, they discover wide variations of native English. In a sense, is it any wonder, then, that a nonnative speakers immigrating into such an environment would also have a great variation in his or her accent, vocabulary, and usage? Furthermore, Major inferred that even some native speakers do not pass for native due to the variation in their own accent (p. 12). From Major's linguistic, quantitative perspective, variation of literacy styles is a factor to consider when looking at the much-politicized issue of standardized or accent-free language. Major contended, "A similar process is involved when both a NS speaker of a nonstandard dialect of English and a NNS of English are attempting to speak standard English" (p. 71). Major's approach defined the parameters of foreign accent, variation, and interlanguage. These need to be taken into account when dealing with ethnic prejudice or acceptance since they are keys to understanding the dynamics that underlie social distancing.

Schumann (1976) identified the phenomenon of social distancing as a major issue in second language acquisition. Social distancing points to the affective dimension of the process of second language acquisition. Insofar as the nonnative speaker feels threatened or anxious, he or she experiences a distancing from other speakers of the target language. This same distancing can inhibit the acquisition because the opportunities for natural interaction are reduced or negated.

Schumann (1976) developed the concept of social distancing further by naming three possible integration strategies that can be employed by the nonnative speaker: assimilation, acculturation, or preservation. Assimilation refers to an extreme adaptation into the new culture such that the home culture is nearly or totally lost. Acculturation describes the possibility of adapting by mixing the best of the new and the home cultures. Finally, preservation is a defensive posturing or entrenching in the home culture to avoid the difficulties of adapting to the new culture. These three techniques represent the various options available to the immigrant when confronted with a change in his or her language and culture.

In addition, Schumann (1976) highlighted four contextual factors that affect social distancing: cohesiveness, congruence, attitudinal differences, and length of stay of the immigrant group. First, cohesiveness describes the tendency of the social group to maintain its unity. Next, congruence refers to the ethnic group's consistency in sharing its common values, beliefs, and customs. Then, the attitudinal differences exhibited by a particular immigrant group point to those perceptions, opinions, and judgments unique to that group alone in contrast to other social or cultural groups. Lastly, the length of stay alludes to the cultural stability of the particular group based upon the amount of time its members have lived within the new dominant culture. All four of these contextual factors help explain the immigrant's experience of separation, uniqueness, and lack of acceptance. Saville-Troike (1996) quite succinctly captured this phenomenon when she opined:

Nonnative speakers of a language may become quite skilled in the use of verbal forms without sharing all the cultural aspects of meaning those forms convey to native speakers. The extent to which they come to share cultural meaning with native speakers depends in large measure on the social contexts of their language acquisition and motivation for language use. (p. 361)

The contextualization of second language acquisition is a crucial issue to consider when reflecting upon immigrants' experiences of English language learning. Erickson (1996) examined the distinction between ethnic borders and ethnic boundaries, that is, those differences that are manipulated to maintain the separation of ethnic groups and those that are natural differences based on positive customs, value, and mores. Ogbu (1991) differentiated between types of immigrants as voluntary or involuntary, that is, those who immigrate by choice and those who immigrate under duress. His distinction recognized the long-range impact that oppression, coercion, and persecution can have on involuntary immigrants to limit their ability to acquire new language. These and other clarifications led to the importance of a contextual approach to understanding second language acquisition. As Saville-Troike (1996) elucidated, "The *communicative situation* is the context within which communication occurs" (p. 369).

This leads to the final issue under consideration: just how does the immigrant acquire a second language? Krashen and Terrell (1985) clearly defined their SLA hypothesis by insisting that

> language acquisition occurs in only one way: by understanding messages. We acquire language when we obtain comprehensible input, when we understand what we hear or read in another language. This means that acquisition is based primarily on what we hear and understand, not what we say. (p. 1)

This fundamental truth of language acquisition stressed the importance of dialogue as the basis of SLA, since that is the natural locus of speaking and listening. Dialogue provides the nonnative speaker the opportunity to receive comprehensible input which in turn helps him or her produce the new language. Although the ideal input would be native speech, the context of second language acquisition includes both native and nonnative input. This led Krashen and Terrell to conclude, "this *interlanguage talk* [authors' emphasis] might be very useful for language acquisition" (p. 35). In fact their input hypothesis contended that "the best way to teach speaking is to focus on listening (and reading) and spoken fluency will emerge on its own" (p. 56). Because these theorists held that comprehension always precedes production, for them both native and nonnative input play an essential role in developing a linguistic repertoire that promotes speaking in the target language.

Zentella (1997) utilized that very term "linguistic repertoire" to capture the Puerto Rican experience of code-switching or interlanguage in New York City. She insisted, "The notion of linguistic repertoire . . . captures the variety of linguistic codes known to speakers and the versatility the codes provide for expressing multiple identities and communicating with other groups" (p. 266). Immigrant peoples draw on their home language and the target language alike to achieve communicative competence within a particular social context. Zentella's study of the Puerto Rican girls in New York City serves as a paradigm for other immigrant experiences of the cultural and linguistic interface that occurs as a result of assimilating, acculturating, and/or persevering as an ethnic group.

To that end, this study of the experiences of Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants in Santa Clara County furthers the effort of unveiling the struggle to communicate in a new culture, crossing ethnic boundaries in the process. Zentella's vision was equally appropriate within this context when she mused, "My most audacious hope is for a truly new century: one in which poor children are not alone in crossing linguistic and cultural frontiers" (p. 288).

Summary

In essence, this study seeks to build upon previous research that has addressed SLA theories and their relationship with ethnic prejudice and acceptance. From the literature review, one can see the usefulness of the social interactionist approach to learning English when dealing with an immigrant who attempts to enculturate into the American way of life. This same social interaction that is so essential for natural language learning can be a source of either ethnic prejudice or ethnic acceptance. Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis indicated that anxiety could be a factor in facilitating or obstructing language acquisition. One means of lowering the affective filter is ethnic acceptance as opposed to ethnic prejudice that can raise the affective filter. Critical pedagogy proposes a methodology that can advocate for the immigrant and work against ethnic prejudice that might increase anxiety. The interactive and contextual nature of language learning lends itself to this method of experience, reflection, and action in a cyclical, ongoing process of naming the immigrant's world. Hence, social interaction becomes the integrative phenomenon that links communicative

competence, intercultural acceptance, and critical consciousness through human dialogue.

After reviewing the literature, the researcher discovered the need to further investigate how communicative competence, intercultural acceptance, and critical consciousness are interconnected in immigrant SLA. The key to link these three elements is the phenomenon of social interaction itself. The methodology and research that follow employed critical reflection and dialogue as tools for studying the social interaction between native and nonnative English speakers. The immigrants themselves participated along with the researcher in the dialogic process that critically reflected upon the role these three same elements play in the immigrant experience.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the study outlines aspects of the research methodology, the purpose of which was to unveil the experiences of English language learning and ethnic acceptance and prejudice among Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants in Santa Clara County, California. In order to interpret the world of the nonnative English speaker, the researcher dialogued with participants from these two ethnic groups to uncover elements of ethnic acceptance and prejudice that either increased or decreased the anxiety of the English learner. The social interaction of the methodology itself elucidates the importance of the speaking and listening process in order to grasp the depth of the immigrants' perceptions of ethnic prejudice and acceptance. The researcher hopes that these same methods have enhanced the intercultural communicative competence of both researcher and participants.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative, participatory research design. The researcher personally audiotaped dialogues, transcribed the text, and analyzed them for emerging themes. The participants were six immigrant adults, three men and three women, originally from Vietnam and Mexico. These voluntary participants are members of Catholic parishes in Santa Clara County accessible because of the researcher's pastoral activity as a Jesuit priest. The initial dialogues

were guided by the series of questions to follow that are based upon the general research questions previously developed in this study.

The design employed in this study was participatory research, a qualitative method with the key elements of dialogue and critical reflection (Kieffer, 1981). This design entails oral communication in the form of speaking and listening as well as critically reviewing dialogues for further clarification, generating new themes, and strategizing to solve problems.

Because participatory research is action based, this study involved both the researcher and the participant in a dialogic exchange of ideas regarding a particular concern or problem. The aim of this dialogue was more than the completion of a series of questions and answers. This form of interaction sought to pose problems and propose solutions based upon the conversations and critical reflections that occur. Ada and Beutel (1993) pointed out the purpose of participatory research is to create an environment in which people from any walk of life might "become the protagonists in their own life stories" (p.1).

Because of the fluid nature of participatory research, the questions that guided the dialogues were also flexible. The questions served merely as an outline to help direct the dialogues and critical reflections and were subject to change based upon the experience of both researcher and participant. Unlike a series of questions in a survey or questionnaire, these questions were open to adaptation, alteration, and interpretation in the course of the dialogue. It was essential for both researcher and participant to engage in ongoing critical reflection as the

dialogue took place to determine its direction and scope. In short, this design was a systematic, investigative process on the part of both researcher and participant.

Unlike quantitative research designs, participatory research makes no claims at generalizability or randomization. The goal of this type of design is to flesh out the human dimension, to unveil a piece of the truth, to give voice to those who have none. Because of this focus, the researcher did not attempt to develop a hypothesis about the results of the dialogues. Since participatory research is more of an exploratory process, its proper goal is social and political transformation through strategic problem solving based upon critical reflection. Rather than demonstrating validity through statistics, this type of design seeks to accurately proclaim the truth together with the marginalized members of society.

Research Setting

Santa Clara County is located at the southern end of the San Francisco Bay in the State of California. The State of California, Department of Finance (2001) indicated that, as of 2000, 1,682,585 people lived within that county. Of these, 323,489 were of Mexican origin and 99,986 were of Vietnamese descent. Because of the large increase in immigrant population from both Mexico and Vietnam between 1975 and 2000, the researcher selected Santa Clara County as a locus of particular interest for the purpose of this study.

The dialogues were conducted at the church sites where the participants attend Bible study or choir practice or in their own homes or apartments. The Catholic parishes are recognized as a place in which participants can speak freely

without pressures from family or immigration officials. The participants met on at least three occasions of one-hour each to dialogue with the help of the question guide.

Participants

The participants for this study were six adults who have completed high school and are nonnative speakers of English. In addition, the six participants were residents of Santa Clara County and immigrants from either Vietnam or Mexico who have arrived to the United States within the last ten years. The interviewees are members of Bible study groups at Catholic parishes located within Santa Clara County where the researcher worked as a parish priest from 1988 till 2000. The participants range in age from 25 to 40, are single, and are employed in service professions. Finally, both men and women, three of each, collaborated in this participatory study to enhance and enrich the interpretation of the experiences from both female and male perspectives.

Questions That Guided the Initial Dialogues

The following questions were used to guide the initial dialogues. These questions were considered tentative because of the nature of participatory research itself and because of the cultural factors that may require adaptations depending upon the context of the participant. Each set of questions was centered on a specific research question as previously developed.

Research Question 1: What are some nonnative English speakers' experiences regarding the way native speakers treat them?

Questions: (a) How do you feel when you talk or listen to a native speaker? (b) Can you think of a specific time or situation when you felt accepted and at ease? (c) What do you think made you feel accepted and at ease? (d) Can you think of a specific time or situation when you were anxious or nervous? (e) What do you think made you feel nervous or anxious? (f) What did the native speaker do to make you anxious?

Research Question 2: How have nonnative English speakers' experiences of ethnic acceptance or ethnic prejudice affected their learning of English?

Questions: (a) What do you call ethnic acceptance? (b) What do you call ethnic prejudice? (c) How do you feel when you observe or experience ethnic acceptance? (d) How do you feel when you observe or experience ethnic prejudice? (e) How has ethnic acceptance affected your learning of English? (e) How about ethnic prejudice?

Research Question 3: What do nonnative English speakers think they need in order to lower their anxiety as they learn a new language?

Questions: (a) How do you want native speakers to treat you? (b) What are some things that might help you feel more at ease as you learn English? (c) How have you overcome anxiety in learning English in the past? (d) What specific things did other people do to make you feel at ease in the past?

Research Question 4: What can native English speakers do to lower nonnative speakers' anxiety?

Questions: (a) Can you recall a specific experience when a native speaker helped you feel more at ease? (b) Can you remember a specific event when you have had a problem with a native speaker that made you feel more nervous or anxious? (c) Can you think of any ways that this situation might have been improved? (d) Of the native speakers you know and like the best, what is it that makes you like them? (e) When native speakers make you angry, what is it specifically that they are doing that bothers you?

Research Question 5: What can nonnative English speakers do to lower their anxiety with native English speakers?

Questions: (a) What can you do to help you get along better with native speakers? (b) Can you think of any examples from your own experience that have helped you feel more at ease talking with native speakers? (c) How do you deal with your nervousness when you talk with native English speakers? (d) What have you done in the past that puts you more at ease in talking with native speakers?

Data Collection

As Geertz (2000) succinctly summarized, "The ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse, *he writes it down* [emphasis author's]" (p. 19). The role of the

researcher in the present study was to tape record, transcribe, and guide the dialogues, as well as analyze the critical reflections of the six immigrant participants. In addition, the interviewer observed the gestures, demeanor, and environment in which the participatory research occurred. Finally, the participants themselves reviewed the transcriptions of their own dialogues to assure their accuracy and to assist the researcher in verifying and analyzing the data collected.

The researcher conducted the participatory dialogues over a period of six months, from September 19, 2004, to early March 6, 2005. Each recorded session lasted for approximately one hour, for a total of three hours of taped dialogues. In general, the one-hour sessions took place one or two weeks apart to allow time for the researcher to transcribe the taped dialogues as well as for the immigrant and researcher to read over the transcription of the previous session. Because of time limitations on the part of the researcher and the immigrants, only one or two participants could be questioned in a given weekend. This accounts for the number of weeks that it took to conduct the 18 sessions.

On at least four occasions, participants had to cancel appointments and reschedule due to illness, work schedule, or family emergencies. On two occasions the researcher reported to the agreed upon location for a session only to learn at that moment that the participant had to cancel. This caused some frustration and confusion for both researcher and participant, but did not stop the progress of the study. In addition, the researcher was surprised that all six participants responded to the questions that guided the dialogues by the end of the second session. Because of this, after reviewing the transcriptions of the first two

sessions, the researcher composed additional follow-up questions to continue the

dialogues in the third hour. These questions sought to clarify previous dialogues

or to interpret the transcriptions of the first two hours of dialogues.

Data Analysis

By taking the stance of listener or learner, the researcher helped the

participants give voice to their experiences of ethnic prejudice and acceptance and

how those same phenomena have affected their English language learning. The

generative themes uncovered through dialogues and coded in transcriptions

revealed common elements present in the six participants' responses. The

researcher then analyzed these themes as they relate to ethnic prejudice and

acceptance and the English language learning process. Dialoguing with six

participants permitted the researcher to listen to diverse immigrant perspectives

and critical reflections. The goal of this breadth of dialoguing was to triangulate

the participatory data across the various transcriptions to ensure authenticity and

validity.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher has received approval (Appendix A) from the Institutional

Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) to conduct this

study. As part of the IRBPHS application, the researcher presented the consent

process and procedures that were followed. To this end, the author mailed each

potential participant a consent letter (Appendix B) to sign giving the researcher

permission to conduct, audiotape, and transcribe the dialogues. Once the consent

letter had been returned, the researcher then arranged interview times with the

participant.

After the subject gave formal written consent, the researcher arranged the

first one-hour, dialogue to take place in the home of the individual or a public

place mutually agreed upon. The participant and researcher arranged at least two,

one-hour follow-up sessions to review transcriptions and continue dialoguing. All

of these interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the

researcher.

By its very nature, participatory dialogues allow the researcher to know

the name, phone number, address, and e-mail address of the participants. Special

care was taken to protect their identity, privacy, and confidentiality. Because of

this, the researcher has used only pseudonyms in the study itself, safeguarded

personal data by password protection on the researcher's computer, locked all

hard copies in the researcher's filing cabinet, and erased tape recordings when

transcriptions were completed. Participants received a 50-dollar gift certificate to

a major bookseller as compensation for their willingness to participate.

Background of the Researcher

The researcher was awarded a Bachelor of Arts Degree in InterAmerican

Studies from the University of the Pacific in 1976. As part of that degree, he

majored in both Spanish and English as a Second Language and earned a

California Preliminary Single Subject Teaching Credential, with authorizations in

Spanish and English. He worked as a high school teacher for a total of six

academic years, first, in Beaumont, California, from 1976 to 1979, and later in

Tacna, Peru, from 1983 to 1985. Returning from Peru to Berkeley, California, he

completed two graduate degrees at the Jesuit School of Theology, the Master of

Divinity (1988) and the Master of Theology in Hispanic Ministry (1989). From

1988 to 2000, he served in two different multicultural Catholic parishes as a Jesuit

priest, in San Jose, California. Finally, he began work at the University of San

Francisco's School of Education in 2000, starting his doctoral studies in fall 2001,

in the Department of International and Multicultural Education.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

In this chapter the researcher reviews the background of each participant, which serves as a backdrop or grounding for the findings and interpretation of the data gleaned from the participatory dialogues. Every participant, whether Vietnamese or Mexican immigrant, brings his or her own set of prior experiences, education, family issues, talents, and living situations to the dialogues. These variables contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice as related in the participatory dialogues themselves and as presented in the findings section. Finally, this chapter interprets the meaning of these experiences through the eyes of the immigrants themselves, lending an authenticity that only they can give to this study.

Profiles of the Participants

The first participant, Tammy, was born in Saigon, Vietnam, in 1973 while the war was still going on between the north and the south. Tammy could not recall the war herself, but learned of it from her parents and relatives as she was growing up and going to school. She immigrated to the United States with her family in 1994 when she was 21 years old. Her family relocated from Saigon to Salt Lake City, Utah, where the sponsor lived. In 2001, Tammy moved to San Jose, California, where she works as a cosmetologist and since last year runs her own business in Morgan Hill. She completed high school in Saigon and attended ESL classes in Saigon. She studied at junior colleges in both Salt Lake City and

San Jose, as well as cosmetology school in both states where she has her certification. Tammy is single, lives with her sister, and participates in the Vietnamese choir group at one of the local parishes in San Jose.

The second participant is a Vietnamese woman named Vivian. She is single, lives in her own apartment, and works as a financial consultant and insurance agent in San Jose, California. She too grew up in Saigon, but moved directly to San Jose after completing her junior year in college. Unfortunately, Vivian had to start her college major all over again, but successfully graduated with her bachelor of science in finance from San Jose State University. Unlike Tammy, Vivian came to the U.S. after her parents, who themselves had sponsored her and her brother. She attributes her success in finance and business to her accountant father's example and encouragement. Vivian was born in 1977 and arrived in San Jose in 1996 at age 19. She and her fiancé, Duc, are engaged to be married in the fall of 2005 and will live together in San Jose with his parents. Like Tammy, Vivian attended ESL classes both in Saigon and at Evergreen College in San Jose. She joined the Catholic Church last year in preparation for her marriage with Duc. Her future brother-in-law, Don, is the president of the choir in which Tammy sings.

The third participant is a Vietnamese man who calls himself Anthony. He emigrated from Saigon in 1994 at the age of 22. Unlike Tammy and Vivian, Tony did not study ESL as a high school student in Saigon, but only later at Evergreen College in San Jose. He is an only child and still lives at home with his parents in San Jose. Tony works two part-time jobs, as an electronic technician for a major

Silicon Valley corporation and as a loan officer. Anthony graduated with a B.S. in Management Information Systems in May 2004, from San Jose State University. On weekends, he teaches first communion classes for Vietnamese children at Most Holy Trinity Parish in San Jose.

The fourth participant is a Mexican immigrant named Daniel. He lives in the neighborhood of Most Holy Trinity Parish. Daniel is a certified landscape specialist. He came to San Jose about nine years ago from Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico at the age of 19. Daniel is 29 years old and has been taking English classes for adults at Overfelt High School to improve his speaking ability. Daniel lived for a few years in Oxnard, California, before finally settling in San Jose nearer to his brother. He hasn't had any formal schooling since high school in Guadalajara, but has learned a great deal of skills during his time in California, from driving tractors, to cotton combines, to forklifts. Later, he worked for a landscaping company and learned the trade as he went. Daniel is energetic, self-motivated, and outgoing. He tries to use his English whenever he can especially when dealing with his landscaping customers.

The fifth participant is a Mexican immigrant named Melanie. She lives in the neighborhood north of Reid-Hillview Airport. Melanie still struggles with her ability to speak English, but enjoys practicing with others. She works as a live-in nanny for a family in Gilroy, but lives the rest of the week with her sister in East San Jose. Melanie earned her bachelor's degree in public accounting in Ciudad Guzman, Jalisco, Mexico. However, she has been unable to use her talents in the field for which she was trained. Only recently she got some part-time work filing

in an accounting office. Her hopes are that she might eventually move up in the company to use her talent as an administrator or accountant.

The sixth participant is a Mexican immigrant named Jimmy. Even though he was born in San Jose, he could be considered an immigrant because his parents moved back to Mexico right after he was born. Jimmy grew up in a small town in the state of Michoacán and came up to San Jose by himself when he was almost 19 years old. He did study for one year at the university level, but decided that job opportunities were better in the United States. Jimmy came up to live with his father's cousins in 1997 and began work for his uncle as an auto detailer. He worked his way up eventually to become an automotive technician. Currently Jimmy lives in the McLaughlin corridor, but has friends and relatives that live near Most Holy Trinity Church. In fact, he participates in the Spanish choir there. Jimmy has moved frequently in the San Jose area for the last eight years and is now 25 years old. He speaks English quite well and has his automotive technician certification after studying at both San Jose City College and De Anza College.

<div align="center">Findings and Interpretation</div>

The findings and interpretation of the data in this study are organized according to the five research questions presented in Chapter I. Although the data collection from the participatory dialogues was guided by these questions, other generative themes surfaced during the retrospective dialoguing that took place in the third hour of each participant's dialogue sessions. The researcher has chosen to present this further data separately from these five categories because of its

tangential relationship with the main focus of the study. The generative themes

are presented in the conclusions section in Chapter V.

Research Question 1: What are some nonnative English speakers' experiences

regarding the way native speakers treat them?

The predominant experience of the six participants in this study was very

positive regarding how they were treated by native speakers. Essential to this

positive quality of their experiences were the patience, openness, and receptivity

of the native speakers who conversed with them. Vivian stated this very

succinctly about her native speaker friend from Evergreen Valley College, "Yeah,

he's kind of like really open-minded" (LaBelle, p. 51).

Nevertheless, each of the six immigrants also related experiences that

were negative, humiliating, demeaning, and even frustrating. Some of them

experienced such poor treatment that they were saddened, felt put down, or

depressed. These experiences were often associated with the workplace or other

public venues. Vivian narrated an encounter with an angry customer who drove

her to tears because of her inflammatory comments about Asians in general. She

recalled vividly, "And she yelled at me. She said, 'You know, you Asians, just go

back to your country! You don't know what you're doing! What you doing here?

I don't like to see all the Asian people here'" (LaBelle, p. 53)!

Nor was she alone in this type of confrontation. Jimmy said, "…because

before, I, I used to think, like, since my pronunciation is not that good, because of

my Spanish accent, probably they make fun of me or something" (LaBelle,

p. 287). In much the same vein, the other five immigrants distinguished between

their early experiences and later situations after they had acquired more English. Melanie illustrated her transition from little English to functional English, "I think that was the best thing to do when you speak another language, is that, to work or to stay in that place, that you have to, you must practice your... to learn a lot of things" (Labelle, p. 167).

The various participants attributed different factors as the cause of their anxiety or comfort when conversing with native English speakers. The most prevalent of the anxiety causing factors was foreign accent. Vivian put it this way, "And I understand them. And sometimes they understand me, but sometimes they don't, because I have an accent" (LaBelle, p. 50). The immigrants themselves identified and interpreted the importance of foreign accent in their communicative competence in English. However, most recognized that accent was an enduring reality in their nonnative English speaking. Still, they concluded that English learning is a life-long process that can diminish the presence of a nonnative accent, but never eliminate it. For example, Daniel admitted, "Well, the, the first times every, with every customer. Yeah, I'm nervous because I don't know you can understand me. But when I see in your eyes, okay, 'He's telling me okay, very good'" (LaBelle, p. 244).

On another front, the participants all stressed the importance of building friendships with native English speakers. The six immigrants recognized that their comfort level increased when they practiced their English with a friendly native English speaker. Sometimes the participants met these new friends at the junior college, other times in the workplace. In either context, they all cited increased

confidence and comfort when speaking with new native speaker friends. Among all the participants, Vivian was most articulate when she related, "So, that's the way I'm comfortable to talk to him, because he not laugh about my accent. He not laugh about my tradition or anything like that" (LaBelle, p. 51). Fortunately, she and others met native speakers of English who exhibited acceptance and understanding with them as immigrants.

In spite of these positive experiences of ease in speaking English, several of the participants cited occasions, especially in their early learning, in which they felt nervous, afraid, threatened, or frustrated. All of these emotional upheavals led to increased anxiety, resulting in a raising of their affective filter. Jimmy explained his struggle, "It's kind of hard to explain cause, at first, it's like, every time I say something, there was always somebody telling me, 'Hey, do it this way or that way'" (LaBelle, p. 290). He felt pressured by native speakers, even members of his own extended family, to correct his mistakes. His cousin and others constantly reminded him of his accent, his grammatical errors, his misuse of vocabulary, and his syntactical confusions. In fact, all of the participants echoed this same uneasiness at error correction. They preferred a more patient, subtle, suggestive style of correcting or guiding when absolutely necessary for communicative competence. Melanie tersely offered, "Yeah, it's frustrating" (LaBelle, p. 174).

Of course, the immigrants' desire for acceptance or comfort when interacting with native English speakers led them to seek out acquaintances and friendships that provided opportunities for dialogue. Sometimes, ESL instructors

provided this source of a supportive dialogue partner. Anthony recalled one such experience with his ESL professor at Evergreen Valley College, "I tried to ask many questions. I tried to have a chance to speak English with her" (LaBelle, pp. 98-99). This self-initiative served him and the other immigrants well as they sought to enter into conversations with more native English speakers. Their effort to reach out to others in order to learn English better in turn built their self-confidence and poise as new English speakers. For Melanie, the key was acceptance of one another as part of the human family: "Well, we're supposed to, all people, we're supposed to be brothers and sisters, so how come somebody wants to attack me if you are not doing anything bad, or anything wrong" (LaBelle, p. 170)?

Research Question 2: How have nonnative English speakers' experiences of ethnic acceptance or ethnic prejudice affected their learning of English?

All six participants struggled to understand the concepts of ethnic acceptance and ethnic prejudice. It became clear in the course of the participatory dialogues that the immigrants were unfamiliar with the terminology central to the study. However, by dialoguing and recalling personal experiences, each participant came to a better understanding of the meaning of these two factors. In short, the dialogues themselves served to help the immigrants reflect upon their experience and gain a better understanding of how both ethnic acceptance and ethnic prejudice had been present in their personal histories.

Experiences of ethnic acceptance can certainly help foster a sense of trust and confidence in the individual immigrant. As Melanie recalled, "When you feel

that acceptance, it's like you start to, to trust in you, that you, you can do something, you know how to do something. You can do it" (LaBelle, p. 176). She and the other participants all remembered many situations in which they felt accepted by native speakers. These supportive interactions served as a turning point in their English language learning to foster within them a sense of reassurance, belonging, and success. Anthony exemplified this when he concluded, "I'm lucky because most of the people I met, they are so friendly" (LaBelle, p. 104). Tammy illustrated this further, "I think that's the distance between us. So I don't talk. They kind of turn me off. But there's some people they're very friendly and they ask questions and then that's, I think we're getting a little closer" (LaBelle, p. 36).

In some cases the encounters of ethnic acceptance took the form of friendships. In other instances the participants recalled supervisors or mentors at work who provided the kind of support and encouragement needed to motivate them to learn more English. As Tammy clarified so well, "And I really appreciate what my mentor he did for me. He's a very nice guy. He explained to me everything every detail" (LaBelle, p. 10). Many times over the participants recounted in detail the positive experiences of native speakers who had helped them, accepted them, and encouraged them to make even greater efforts to learn English. Melanie conjectured, "When you feel that, uh, they're accepting you, you feel like very stronger" (LaBelle, p.177). She and the others valued the effect native speakers who are supportive and accepting can have on them as English language learners.

The influence of ethnic acceptance can run even deeper, to touch the very self-identity of the immigrant. Vivian recalled some cases of ethnic prejudice, but still surmised:

> So, that's what I want more acceptance. I want to be accepted more because I've been working on that. I want people to be accepting me for who I am, not because I'm speaking English good or something like that. (LaBelle, p. 57)

Much like the others in the study, she needed to overcome bad experiences as well. Vivian's bold statement is echoed in Tammy's proclamation:

> When I do an American customer, sometimes I cannot speak well and I cannot explain all the advice for customers when they ask me. But I really appreciate for those people, they accept me as the cosmetologist and they keep coming with me. They accept me as, for who I am. They trust my ability to do for them even though I cannot speak very well in English. (LaBelle, pp. 5-6)

In fact, all six immigrants in the study sought the same kind of acceptance that in turn fostered a sense of self-worth, self-identity, and confidence.

However, each participant also related serious events of ethnic prejudice in their lives. Jimmy most articulately illustrated this when he recalled an encounter with his boss at the shop:

> But he was, like, discriminating us all the time. And he kept telling us that we were, just like, not worth it, to be in the place. Because he's like, he could just get rid of us and get new people like that. He did that once. But since none of us had that English to, it was like... (LaBelle, p. 293)

This confrontation with his supervisor engendered in Jimmy a sense of fear, self-deprecation, and worthlessness. The severity of the situation was heightened because he did not have the English tools to respond. The result was that Jimmy felt deeply saddened, "like when you want to do something, but can't do anything" (LaBelle, p. 293).

Tammy also had a workplace experience of ethnic prejudice. When she was studying at the cosmetology school in San Jose, along with other Vietnamese women, her instructor became very indignant when they were speaking in their native language instead of English. Tammy recounted vividly: "And he walked by and he said, "You cannot speak Vietnamese here, okay? You have to speak English! You have to speak English! No Vietnamese here" (LaBelle, p. 13). She and her colleagues then switched to English out of fear of the instructor. At the time, Tammy felt afraid, hurt, and angry. It was only later, after reflecting, that she could reinterpret this experience in another light.

Nevertheless, the six participants insisted that they were able to overcome these negative experiences and turn them around for their own good in learning English. Vivian concluded, "But when you've been prejudiced, I'm thinking I need to learn more to be fluent in English so maybe they can change their mind about me" LaBelle, p.57). For her, the unpleasant, discomforting encounters of prejudice served as a motivation to make even more effort to learn English well. In fact, all six participants cited instances of this same phenomenon in each of their lives. Daniel assigned feelings of humiliation to part of the human condition we all experience when he quipped, "Well, um, deception, deception, why do some people think like that? Um, I work here. I'm very good and everything and, uh, why? I can't understand. So you know, in this life happens everything" (LaBelle, p. 249).

Anthony interpreted these events as personality issues more than ethnic issues. He was able to overcome experiences of ethnic prejudice by forgiving the

native speaker much as he would forgive any other person. "I'm a person to

forgive easily. Yeah, I don't know why. I just forgive" (LaBelle, p. 107). Tammy

reinterpreted her cosmetology instructor's reprimand to speak English only as a

boon to practicing her English. "I appreciate that because if he didn't say that,

we'd still be talking Vietnamese. So, we cannot practice English well" (LaBelle,

p. 13). Jimmy, although saddened, hurt, and angry, recognized that the put-down

by his boss at the detail shop served as an incentive to study English harder:

> Yeah, but at the same time, I was, well I felt down. But at the same time, it
> gave me the, the idea, just the strength to go to school and learn English
> and just tell him to do whatever he wanted to do with the job.
> (LaBelle, p. 294)

Research Questions 3: What do nonnative English speakers think they need in

order to lower their anxiety as they learn a new language?

The participants related many techniques that might assist nonnative

English speakers to lower their anxiety. These methods included such simple tools

as not interrupting, giving cues or hints, listening, being patient, and speaking

slowly on the part of the native speaker. Tammy highlighted these by stating,

"...don't interrupt them in the middle of the conversation. Just let them finish the

talking, and then you can ask them again" (LaBelle, p. 15). In general, the six

immigrants in the study tended to refer to what the native speakers could do rather

than what they themselves might attempt to lower their anxiety.

However, a few of the participants pointed out that the nonnative speakers

must make an effort to work through their anxiety and try to speak the best they

can. As Anthony expressed it, "If I stay home, I just read the newspaper, it's just,

it's not enough" (LaBelle, p. 113). To lower their anxiety, the immigrants need to

take a risk, even if it means making mistakes. Still, with the support and

encouragement of native speakers, the nonnative speakers will be more at ease to

accept correction and guidance. Melanie elucidated the importance of

encouraging, positive support, "And when some nice native speakers tell me I

speak well English, they make me feel like confident, more confident. Like I can't

believe" (LaBelle, p. 191).

Even so, when all else fails to lower their anxiety, the nonnative English

speakers must draw from other inner resources. At times, the participants simply

told about the need to patiently wait until they could grasp what they were hearing

in English. Jimmy recollected,

> And I was getting a little frustrated cause I was, like what I told you, like, 'Three times I told you and you don't understand.' But it was just like they didn't understand. Or probably they just didn't pay that much attention cause my English wasn't that good. And the thing that helped me there, or back then, was patience. (LaBelle, p. 304)

Clearly, because language is dialogic by its nature, these new English speakers, as

well as the native speakers they met, played a role in lowering the tension or

anxiety of an encounter. The native speakers needed to pay attention, the

nonnative speakers could use more patience, and both participants in the

conversation would do well to ask clarifying questions when they do not

understand.

Another attribute that some of the participants identified was open-

mindedness. Several contended that, if they were open to new possibilities, they

would feel less threatened or anxious about things in general. As Melanie

indicated, "Like your mind opens to find that here you realize that there is some other world not just Mexico...Yeah, because it's the only way that you can communicate with another people. It's the only language that you can, it's going to be universal" (LaBelle, pp. 192-194). She viewed openness to learning English and experiencing a new culture as essential to adapting and making progress as a person. Vivian echoed this same sentiment when she concluded, "So, you need to treat others as equal" (LaBelle, p. 59).

All the participants wanted to fit or belong in the new culture in order to feel more comfortable and less anxious. Jimmy captured this notion when he recognized, "Yeah, cause I was the one who wanted to get accepted" (LaBelle, p. 304). This desire for belonging, acceptance, and participation in the new society was common to the six immigrants who dialogued in the study. One clear indicator of this was how the native speakers treated the immigrants themselves. It was Anthony who turned the question around on the researcher, "How would you like Vietnamese people to treat you? Respect, and honesty. Friendly" (LaBelle, p. 108). Hence, mutuality and equality in social interaction can provide a sense of ease and comfort for the nonnative English speaker. Vivian warned, "Don't look at me, because I'm Asian or because I'm poorer than you or because I'm richer than you. Just treat me equal. That's what I want. That they trust me" (LaBelle, p. 60).

Some of the participants believed that native speakers could engender a self-confidence and pride among nonnative English speakers. Jimmy remembered how his manager sent out positive signals to encourage him to excel:

> But there was always this manager, he was, like, he told me once, 'I know that you're gonna do better. I know you have the thing inside you that's gonna be better.' And those were words that kept locked in my head. Thinking, I don't why he said that. (LaBelle, p. 307)

These words of encouragement and recognition not only lowered his anxiety, but also motivated Jimmy to study English harder as well as to perform his work better. Melanie recognized this same factor in her life, "They all of them give us, they, how do you say, like, uh, an incentive to have" (LaBelle, p. 188). By collaborating and mixing with native speakers, Anthony indicated, "When the people know each other, they treat each other better" (LaBelle, p. 110).

Research Question 4: What can native English speakers do to lower nonnative speakers' anxiety?

The participants most frequently mentioned the importance of listening as a characteristic that would help lower their anxiety. Each of the immigrants perceived this in his or her own way, such as facial expressions, encouraging tone, and patient or polite choice of words. Tammy summarized, "It's just the way that they open the conversation and make me feel comfortable to talk to them" (LaBelle, p. 62). She and the others inferred a posture of listening on the part of the native English speakers through their own observations of a wide variety of cues, verbal and nonverbal. Melanie viewed it as her boss's patience and trust in her as well as the help of her coworkers to communicate with customers in the Chinese restaurant. "Yeah, she was patient and...my coworkers helped me to..." (LaBelle, pp.196-198). Melanie further reflected, "And be patient cause it's

another language and sometimes I cannot explain how I would like to because I don't know very well the language" (LaBelle, p. 203).

Another experience shared by several of the participants was the verbal encouragement from native English speakers. Tammy reminisced, "And he said, 'Oh you speak English very well!' And I think that's the way they encourage me to learn English more even though I still have the accent" (LaBelle, p. 20). And she was not alone in cherishing this type of recognition. Anthony looked back upon his years at Evergreen Valley College with joy and pride when Mrs. Rucker presented him with a literary prize. "But she give me the, the paper, the prize, congratulations, and the book with, with my name. The book, in, in the magazine there's my story. I still keep the book with me" (LaBelle, p. 125). He interpreted this experience as an incentive to continue striving to learn more English, as much and as well as he could.

All of the participants recognized the importance of interacting with native English speakers as the best way to become more comfortable in English. Clearly they each came to the realization that dialoguing with native speakers was the most natural and effective way to achieve a level of spoken English that was comfortable for them. Tammy insisted, "Because I'm thinking, if I do my part and they don't do their part, it's not gonna help by itself. It's not one-way" (LaBelle, p. 63). The responsibility to communicate lies with both the native and nonnative speaker alike. The communicative burden is shared by both listener and speaker in the social interaction between immigrant and native English speaker (Lippi-

Green, 1997). For Tammy, the failure to interact will result in her isolation and the limitation of speaking her native Vietnamese only.

Research Question 5: What can nonnative English speakers do to lower their anxiety with native English speakers?

Many of the participants cited perseverance as the key to overcoming anxiety in speaking with native English speakers. Early in their learning of English, all six immigrants in the study experienced setbacks, obstacles, frustrations, and traumas that produced a great deal of nervousness and anxiety. However, to a person, they underscored the effort they had to make in order to move beyond these hurdles. Melanie indicated that, "You learn from them to, to keep on, to keep going" (LaBelle, p. 206). This type of resilience or self-motivation became crucial for the participants to move on from experiences of ethnic prejudice to later enjoy the more predominant situations or events that reflected ethnic acceptance. An immigrant needs to make the effort as Vivan suggested, "You have to reach out" (LaBelle, p. 66).

In addition, some of the participants recommended patience, poise, and relaxation as ways to overcome anxiety in dealing with native English speakers. They pointed to patience with one's errors, poise or self-confidence to correct and accept correction, and relaxation to settle the nerves. Melanie referred to positive self-talk to achieve a sense of calm: "Well, I think first to tell yourself you can do it. Relax, try to relax. And think you can do it" (LaBelle, p. 202). Anthony preferred to meet with native English speakers in person because phone conversations are more anxiety-provoking. In some cases, avoiding or postponing

encounters with difficult people might prove useful in reducing anxiety. Anthony remembered, "And many people they're so difficult to get along. I just stay away from them" (LaBelle, p. 136).

Regardless of their country of origin, all six participants experienced the whole gamut of human emotions. Although their personalities varied greatly, they all recognized that they had to confront their own fear, anger, and sadness. Tammy phrased it this way, "...even though we are Vietnamese, I'm Vietnamese or you are American, or other people's African, but we are still humans" (LaBelle, p. 28). Anthony liked to think of these difficulties as personality differences that can cause anxiety due to a particular style of relating and not because of the ethnic differences between him and the native English speaker. Vivian felt, "You know, if you correct it nicely, I'll continue with you" (LaBelle, p. 68). In short, these particular immigrants suggested that the human factor must be taken into account in order to recommend means of reducing anxiety.

Finally, the immigrants in the study emphasized the importance of effort on their part to relate to other English speakers. Vivian summarized, "Um, communicate. Talk. Make friends to not like native Americans, but other foreigners who come to live in America too" (LaBelle, p. 65). This same sentiment was echoed by Melanie when she reiterated the necessity of reaching out to others in order to overcome one's shyness, nervousness, or anxiety. And, if those efforts do not succeed, then Melanie recommended simply, "...to ask for help" (LaBelle, p. 204). Of course, this means finding those individuals who will be supportive and enter into the dialogue. Tammy encouraged nonnative English

speakers, "I would find some friends or someone they can be my teacher, or they can be like a good friend. And I keep talking with them" (LaBelle, p. 31). Still, even this requires effort on the immigrant's part as well as patience and acceptance on the part of the native English speaker.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the results of the participatory study

conducted with Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants. To this end, the researcher

outlines and describes the most cogent themes generated during the dialogues as a

basis for the drawing conclusions from the data presented and interpreted in

Chapter IV. In addition, reflecting critically on the participants' own

interpretation of their experiences, the researcher proposes recommendations for

practitioners of adult English as a Second Language programs. The following

section recommends areas for further research that were unveiled by the

participatory dialogues. Finally, the researcher reflects on his use of participatory

in this study of ethnic acceptance and prejudice among English language learners.

Summary of Findings

Ethnic acceptance and ethnic prejudice are experiences common to many

immigrants. These experiences can be sources of frustration and anxiety on one

hand or motivation and determination on the other (Berry, 1987). Successful

immigrants overcome their fear and anxiety by making friends with native and

nonnative speakers alike. Furthermore, they have to step out of their comfort zone

to achieve greater communicative competence (Hymes, 1964; Vygotzy, 1978).

Indeed, listeners and speakers alike bear the burden of communication together

(Lippi-Green, 1997). On the one hand, immigrants must be responsible for taking

the initiative to attempt to speak English. On the other, native speakers must learn

strategies for listening and understanding, accepting and reinforcing the nonnative speakers (Polio & Gass, 1998)

Among the participants in the study, the Vietnamese immigrants expressed a drive to learn English even though they experienced some incidents of prejudice. The three of them had an approach to life that focused on the positive aspects rather than the negative. All of the Vietnamese participants believed they could block the experience of ethnic prejudice out of their minds. They felt they could concentrate their energy on learning English as a means to belong in the American culture.

The Mexican immigrants, in contrast, did not express this same style of determination to learn English. This perception, in part, reflected Ogbu's (1991) thesis which contrasted involuntary versus voluntary immigrants' reactions to a new culture. All three participants in this study were more intent on learning English pragmatically to function in their work, all the while speaking Spanish whenever possible, especially at home. They expressed anger at the prejudice they have experienced, but seemed to comfort themselves in their home culture to offset these negative experiences. A great deal of their self worth and confidence came from the family and other Mexican immigrants, although the participants encountered strong support from a number of native English speakers in the workplace or in school settings.

One possible factor that may have led to the difference between the approaches of these two ethnic groups is the variation in the distances that separate them from their homelands. Since Mexico borders on California, the

Mexican immigrants fostered nostalgia and a possibility of returning to their home towns one day, either for visits or for good. The Vietnamese participants all expressed their acceptance and appreciation of America as their new country and culture. They all would like to go back to visit Vietnam one day, but never to return permanently. Of course, such a trip would entail a greater expense in time and money than the Mexican immigrants.

All of the participants experienced both ethnic acceptance and ethnic prejudice. Most often, however, the predominant experiences were positive and accepting. Successful immigrants overcome their fear and anxiety by making friends with native and nonnative speakers alike. Furthermore, they have to step out of their comfort zone to achieve greater communicative competence. Listeners as well as speakers bear the burden of communication together. Immigrants must be responsible for taking the initiative to attempt to speak English. Native speakers must learn strategies for listening and understanding, accepting and reinforcing the nonnative speakers. America is seen as a place of freedom and opportunity by the immigrants in the study. Immigrants and natives alike can be accepting or prejudiced.

Conclusions: Generative Themes

In this section the researcher reviews those topics that surfaced naturally during the course of the participatory dialogues. Some of these themes were rather unexpected in nature. Others were simply further developments of the questions to guide the initial dialogues. In either case, such generative themes were artifacts of the participants themselves as they strove to read their world, to interpret their

experiences with a more critical consciousness. Rather than stifle these seemingly tangential themes, the researcher chose to give them voice, to encourage their elucidation. Ultimately, these same generative themes reinforce the participatory nature of the study and give due recognition to the authority of the immigrants themselves as the best source of knowledge and critical analysis of their experiences.

Acceptance

Although all six participants had a general sense of the meaning of acceptance in their lives, none of them clearly connected this acceptance to issues of ethnicity. By unveiling this aspect of acceptance with them, the researcher guided the dialogues to look more deeply into the full nature of acceptance in their new cultural milieu of the United States. The participatory dialogues probed more intensely into the meaning of experiencing ethnic acceptance as a means of lowering anxiety and heightening motivation to acquire English. To a great extent, the social interaction between the researcher and the participant encouraged a retrospective look at how profound the experiences of each participant were in relationship to his or her sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-motivation. In brief, for the participants, ethnic acceptance really referred to people being accepted for who they are, for their culture.

Prejudice

In the process of guiding the participatory dialogues, the researcher became keenly aware that the term ethnic prejudice was new to most of the

participants. Because of this, a great deal of dialogue time was spent in clarifying

and discussing the meaning of this term and how the participants interpreted its

role in past experiences. Even further, this effort provided an opportunity for each

immigrant to grow in his or her self-awareness and ability to critically reflect

upon negative experiences from the past. Many of the participants viewed accent

as a reason why some native speakers demonstrated signs of ethnic prejudice

because it was a clue to their foreignness. Others pointed to the blame associated

with merely being from another country as the core of ethnic prejudice. In short,

they saw themselves as an easy target for discrimination and finger pointing. In

essence, this particular generative theme gave rise to a new consciousness among

the immigrants regarding the impact these experiences have made in their lives as

nonnative English speakers.

Power

Several of the participants discussed their experiences of powerlessness

during the dialogues. The immigrants perceived that they were treated as less than

native speakers at times. They pointed out ways in which others presumed that

they were not educated because they could not speak English without an accent.

This type of treatment often resulted in frustration and sometimes even anger on

the immigrant's part. Tammy captured this feeling of desperation best when she

related:

> And I want, like, native Americans to pay attention about Vietnamese
> because in a way, we're feeling like we don't have a voice yet in the
> society because we're just fugitives. Look at that, we don't have much of a
> voice. And you know, sometimes, we feel like we're not belonging to, you
> know, this society because we have no power, we have no voice to talk.
> (LaBelle, p. 61)

The participants all expressed their hope that this research would be a voice for all immigrants who struggle to learn English, who long to be full members of our American culture and society.

This language power play tilts in favor of the native speaker. As educated as the immigrant might be, he or she cannot convince others without the power of the English language. When she competed in an interview for a job, Melanie realized that her English was inadequate. She had to be content with baby sitting until an opportunity came along to begin at the bottom in an accounting office, all the while knowing she already holds a degree in public accounting from Mexico. Because his English was still limited, Jimmy could not speak out to tell off his supervisor in the detail shop when he was put down just because he is Mexican. The immigrants' frustration was palpable when they recollected experiences of this type of disempowerment.

Motivation

The six participants in the study all recognized the importance of encouragement and motivation in learning English. Living in the ethnically mixed neighborhoods of San Jose, these immigrants felt the obligation to learn English in order to communicate with people of many countries of origin. In the ESL classes, they experienced a great variety of ethnic groups, all striving to become competent in the speaking of English. Both the Vietnamese and the Mexican participants viewed this as a motivation or reinforcement because they recognized they were not alone in studying English. In fact, some of them commented that they felt they had an easier time of it than some other ethnic groups because their

home languages used the Roman alphabet and had many sounds in common with English. Melanie compared her difficulties with Japanese and Chinese students in her class. She concluded that, if they could master English, so could she.

Belonging

Part of the challenge of learning a new language is adjusting to the new culture in which one lives. The participants recognized the importance of fitting in with their coworkers, classmates, and neighbors as a way to achieve a sense of belonging. Naturally, each immigrant in the study related stories of the difficulties of arriving in the United States. Once here, they were confronted with even more challenges: new customs, values, and beliefs. Melanie and Vivian found that conversing with other immigrants from different countries helped them feel more a part of the new culture. Tammy and Daniel valued the learning of English as a way to acquire a sense of belonging. Jimmy reflected on the great variety of immigrants in the neighborhood and how he felt she fit in as part of this multicultural reality. Daniel felt most accepted when one of his Anglo customers invited him and his work crew into his house in Los Altos for lunch and soft drinks. Melanie recalled the trust and acceptance she felt when the owner of the Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles went on a vacation and left her in charge. All of these experiences of belonging, acceptance, and trust fostered the participants' feelings of comfort and ease, essential elements in facilitating their learning of English.

Perseverance

This final theme of perseverance recurred with great frequency during the participatory dialogues. The immigrants all expressed the opinion that individual effort and perseverance are keys to progress in acquiring English. Vivian insisted that by confronting her nervousness, by facing it, she could overcome it. Jimmy claimed that the immigrants need to make a decision to learn English no matter what. Certainly, it helped many of the participants to have enough friends, both native and nonnative speakers, with whom they could practice their English. For all of the immigrants in the study, the key was to take action, to reach out, to not give up regardless of the experiences of prejudice they might encounter.

Recommendations for Practitioners

In this section, the researcher describes a series of recommendations that the immigrants themselves offered during the course of the participatory dialogues. These suggested SLA practices are grounded in their experiences of struggling to learn English and are a result of critical reflection. Since these same language acquisition techniques have proved useful for them individually, the participants expressed the hope that they might also help other immigrants in the future.

Mixed ESL Groupings

One useful recommendation from the participatory dialogues was the mixing of immigrants from different countries of origin in ESL classes. The participants felt that this would promote the use of English among the

conversation groups as the only means of communicating effectively. The

immigrants had experienced ESL groups of their ethnic peers that had resorted to

conversing in their home language instead of the target language. The simplest

and most effective corrective for this would be to ensure that different ethnic

groups are represented in each ESL conversation group.

Closed Captions Reading Methodology

From both the Mexican and Vietnamese participants, the researcher

learned of the popularity of using closed captions when watching English

language television. The immigrants found this a useful tool to help them with

their reading of English as well as with their aural comprehension. Perhaps during

the first year of practicing English the immigrants could make use of this tool to

transition to oral English television viewing. The captioning might serve to lower

one's anxiety and assist in the comprehension of new words and sounds. This

increased input will promote the production of new English output at a later time.

This brings to mind the way Krashen (1985) reiterated the dictum of his input

hypothesis, "Comprehension always precedes production" (p. 23).

Listening Skills

The shared communicative burden not only applies to speaking, but also

listening. The immigrants all expressed the need for native speakers to take the

time to listen to them. Some of the participants encountered native speakers who

rushed them, interrupted them, or didn't have the patience to ask questions. All of

these are part of listening actively to the nonnative speaker. Some of the participants welcomed correction by native speakers, especially if this was done in a supportive, interactive atmosphere. Native speakers need to develop an ear for the dialectal variations among immigrant groups that live in their neighborhoods in order to communicate effectively. The participants suggested that, with practice, with patience, and with understanding, the dialogues between them and native speakers could be more conducive toward their goal of communicative competence.

Native Speaker Friends

Several of the participants have developed long-lasting friendships with native speakers. These types of friends are extremely helpful to the immigrants who want to learn English. On one level, they provide the type of nurturing, supportive environment which helps lower the affective filter of the nonnative speaker. Further, such friendships provide numerous opportunities to practice speaking English and to develop better aural comprehension for native and nonnative speakers alike. Building trust between friends can also allow for appropriate correcting of the language errors to take place. Finally, the self-confidence engendered in friendships with native speakers helps empower the nonnative speakers to venture outside of their comfort zones and deal with more difficult situations that may arise in the workplace or neighborhood.

Workplace ESL

Several of the participants and their family members have benefited from ESL classes of various types. Some have even had classes provided by their employers. Because of their age and level of education, many immigrants would be well served to have ESL classes right in their places of employment. Employers would benefit from increased productivity, morale, and efficiency among immigrant workers. The more comfortable the immigrant employee is with speaking English with native speakers, the happier and more communicative he or she will be.

Cultural Survival Techniques

Of course, like many other immigrant people, the Vietnamese and Mexican participants in this study enjoy the comfort of their own language, customs, and beliefs. The home, the church, the ethnic businesses, all provide a comfort zone or safety net for newly arrived nonnative speakers. Fellow immigrants can help one another in the process of adapting to the local culture and language. In general, in Santa Clara Valley, most of the goods and services needed by the Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants are available in their home language. These familiar ethnic elements can buffer the impact of the transition and help to lower the anxiety the nonnative speakers feel when confronted with a new language and culture. Nevertheless, the individual immigrant has to take the initiative to venture outside her or his zone to make progress in learning the second language.

Recommendations for Further Research

Among the backgrounds of the participants in the dialogues, a diversity of educational experiences was evident. Some of the immigrants benefited from ESL classes in Mexico or Vietnam. Others did not have this advantage. Some immigrants questioned the usefulness or quality of the ESL programs in their home countries. Still others recalled frustration when they were informed that their university degrees were not valid in the United States. All of these various experiences suggest the need for in-depth study of the educational systems in Vietnam and Mexico to better understand the funds of knowledge that the immigrants bring with them to the United States (Moll, 1992). Such research could assist in the planning of ESL curricula for adolescent or adult immigrants who arrive with an educational foundation that can serve as a basis for further second language acquisition.

This same international perspective suggests a need to research the curricula, materials, and methodologies of ESL programs in Vietnam and Mexico. The participants of this study did not come to the United States out of a vacuum. Their life experiences, education, and family upbringing are all factors to be considered in planning ESL classes here in the United States. Such research might shed light on common texts, methods, and program designs in order to make the transition to the new culture and language smoother and more pedagogically effective.

Another curiosity exposed in the course of the participatory dialogues was in the area of the motivation of adult ESL learners. Research into factors which

might contribute to enhance the immigrants' motivation to learn and study English would be an aid to reducing the anxiety that can inhibit the SLA process. The participants in the current study repeatedly cited the importance of the encouragement of others, especially teachers and native English speakers, to motivate them to continue learning the new language. Motivation, then, appears to be crucial for the busy, working immigrant adult to become communicatively competent in English. To probe what motivates adult English language learning, further research would do well to share the analysis of their experiences with the participants.

The participatory dialogues also suggested another possible area of research: the reasons for immigrating to the United States and how this might affect the SLA process. Perhaps by surveying groups of adult immigrants from two or more countries of origin, the researcher could discover some underlying influences that might accelerate or decelerate the acquisition of English among those groups. Some of the participants in this study conjectured that there are indeed differences between groups such as Mexicans and Vietnamese due to distance or proximity from the home country. Ogbu (1991) recognized these same factors in his development of the conceptualization of voluntary versus involuntary immigrants. Again, the immigrants of this study alluded to an attitude of temporary immigration instead of permanent immigration that might negatively affect the motivation of the immigrants to learn English. Obviously, further research is needed in this area.

Finally, more study would be helpful about the differences in SLA among the Vietnamese immigrants who arrived in different eras, e.g., war refugees, boat people, and open market emigration. In the course of the participatory dialogues, the Vietnamese immigrants categorized their experience of immigration as different from those who fled during the Vietnam War and those who escaped clandestinely on private boats. The three adult Vietnamese in this study considered themselves open market or free immigrants because they were sponsored by relatives and arrived by commercial jet after changes in the policy of the Vietnamese government. More research is needed regarding the methods of ESL that might be most effective and useful with each of these waves of Vietnamese immigrants.

<div align="center">Researcher's Reflections</div>

In the process of conducting this study, the researcher experienced first-hand the appropriateness and effectiveness of participatory dialogues as a methodology. The dialogues presented the researcher as well as the participants with an excellent opportunity to reflect together critically on the experiences of language learning, ethnic acceptance, and ethnic prejudice. Further, the sessions provided an environment for the nonnative speakers to interact comfortably with a native English speaker on a deeper level.

The researcher began the study with a curiosity about the impact of ethnic prejudice on the immigrants' English language learning. At the same time, he wondered how much acceptance they had experienced. The participants were most eager to share how they had overcome these obstacles and succeeded in

learning more English. The researcher was surprised by the predominance of their experiences of ethnic acceptance that helped comfort them and ease the process of English language acquisition. This emphasis on ethnic acceptance might be attributed to factors such as the participant's relationship with the researcher as a Catholic priest, their rather advantaged socio-economic status, their level of formal education, or simply their religious bias favoring a positive interpretation of events.

Because of his interaction with the immigrants, the researcher came to realize that his perception of the Mexican and Vietnamese immigrant reality was skewed to focus too much on experiences of ethnic prejudice. He had misjudged the plight of the immigrants who confronted their anxieties, fears, and anger to forge ahead in their English language learning. The participants taught the researcher to recognize that their experiences of ethnic acceptance outweighed the effect that ethic prejudice had upon them. This new awareness helped him discover the great hope that intercultural dialogue holds for native and nonnative speakers alike. Finally, the researcher had the privilege and the joy of listening to personal accounts of the immigrants' struggles and hardships, as well as victories and successes, on the way to intercultural communicative competence.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Approval Letter from IRBPHS

April 27, 2004

Jeffrey T. Labelle, S.J.
SOE/IME Department
USF

Dear Fr. Labelle:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study "Experiences of Ethnic Acceptance..."

Your initial application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #04-049). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP--Chair IRBPHS
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APPENDIX B

Consent To Be A Research Participant

University of San Francisco

Purpose and Background

Fr. Jeffrey T. LaBelle, S.J., a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is doing a study on experiences of ethnic prejudice and acceptance among immigrants in Santa Clara County, California. Over the past several years, more and more people are immigrating to California from Mexico and Vietnam. The researcher is interested in understanding the experiences of ethnic prejudice and acceptance among immigrants from these two countries and how they feel this has affected their learning of English.

I am being asked to participate because I am a nonnative English speaker and a Mexican or Vietnamese immigrant between the ages of 25 and 40, who has arrived in the United States within the last ten years.

Procedures

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in three, one-hour tape-recorded dialogues in English.

2. I will participate in the interviews in my own home or another public place that I agree upon with the research assistant.

3. I will review the transcriptions of these dialogues for accuracy and give feedback about any changes that need to be made.

4. I will assist the researcher in the interpretation of our dialogues.

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. It is possible that some of the questions to guide the dialogues may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

3. Because the time required for my participation may be up to 3 hours, I may become tired or bored.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is an experience of ethnic acceptance and support in the ongoing process of English language learning.

Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement

I will be given a 50-dollar gift certificate to Border's Booksellers for my participation in this study. I will receive this gift immediately after I have completed the final dialogue. If I decide to withdraw from the study before I have completed participating or the researcher decides to terminate my study participation, I will still receive the gift certificate.

Questions

I have talked to Fr. LaBelle about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call him at (415) 422-2117.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Building, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Consent

I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights" and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep. PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to

withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a student or employee at USF. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Date of Signature

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date of Signature
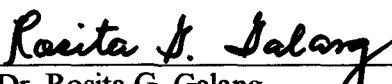
THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Experiences of Ethnic Acceptance and Prejudice in English Language Learning:

Immigrants' Critical Reflections

This research was conducted to critically reflect on the effects of ethnic

acceptance and prejudice on English language learning among immigrant

nonnative speakers. To that end, this study investigated critical reflections on the

experiences of ethnic acceptance and prejudice among six adult immigrant

English language learners. Three Vietnamese and three Mexican adults aged

between 25 and 40, who had less than ten years in the United States, were chosen

for the study. Five specific research questions were addressed: (1) What are some

nonnative English speakers' experiences regarding the way native speakers treat

them? (2) How have nonnative English speakers' experiences of ethnic

acceptance or ethnic prejudice affected their learning of English? (3) What do

nonnative English speakers think they need in order to lower their anxiety as they

learn a new language? (4) What can native English speakers do to lower

nonnative speakers' anxiety? (5) What can nonnative English speakers do to

lower their anxiety with native English speakers?

This qualitative study used participatory dialogues to elicit responses to these same research questions by means of a guide to the initial dialogues that consisted of more specific questions based upon each of the five research questions. The researcher met with each participant for three, one-hour dialogues that were audio taped and transcribed for later review for accuracy, coded and analyzed for generative themes, and interpreted for conclusions and recommendations by both the research and the participants. All six of the participants pointed to a predominance of ethnic acceptance that sustained and motivated them to persevere in acquire English. Findings suggested that, even though many of the adult immigrant participants experienced ethnic prejudice, they developed strategies to overcome anxiety, frustration, and fear. The dialogues generated themes that illustrated the key results of the study: acceptance, prejudice, power, motivation, belonging, and perseverance. All of these factors were interpreted as essential to consider when developing English language learning programs for adult immigrants. Recommendations for ESL teachers working with adult immigrants included ethnically mixed ESL groupings, closed-captions reading methodology, listening skills, native speaker friends, workplace ESL, and cultural survival techniques.

Jefffey T. LaBelle, Author

Dr. Rosita G. Galang,
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee