

Intercultural Communication Skills: How Non-native Speakers Acculturate to the Midwest



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Rationale

According to the Migration Policy Institute, roughly 1.8 million people migrate to the United States each year as refugees, immigrants, and students. These individuals try to adapt to their new surroundings by becoming acculturated to their host country. Research has shown that communication skills play a vital role in the acculturation process (Shuang & Louw, 2007, Jiang, Green, Henley, & Masten, 2009). More specifically, the majority of research has shown that language proficiency (Stoldoska 2008, Trebbe 2007, Miglietta 2009, Saumure & Yang 2006) is a major aspect of one's acculturation process. However, specific communication skills, such as self-disclosure (Wheless and Grotz, 1976) and communicative adaptability (Duran & Kelly, 1988) have not been sufficiently studied as they relate to acculturation. This study asks how communicative adaptability of non-natives and self-disclosure to the host population are related to acculturation.

Methods

Participants

- Refugees 12
- International students 24

Measures

Communicative Adaptability Scale (Duran & Kelly, 1988):

- Measures non natives' abilities to adapt their communication style to that of their host population. This scale was reliable ($\alpha=.89$, $M=32.47$, $SD=8.28$)
- Sample Question: "I enjoy socializing with various groups of people in my host country."

Self Disclosure Scale (Wheless and Grotz, 1976):

- Measures participants' level of personal disclosure to people of their host country. The scale consisted of four subscales: Intended Disclosure, Amount, Control of Depth, and Honesty/Accuracy. This scale was reliable ($\alpha=.85$, $M=62.11$, $SD=12.43$)
- Sample Question: "Frequently do I express my personal beliefs and opinions."

Acculturation Scale (Hazuda, 1988):

- Measures non-natives' proficiencies in the English language, how much they maintained their original cultural identity, and the attitudes they felt about both original culture as well as host culture. This scale was reliable ($\alpha=.79$, $M=19.44$, $SD=4.23$)
- Sample Question: "In your opinion, how well do you understand spoken English?"

Procedure

- Qualtrics survey
- Survey sent via email and facebook
- Convenience sample

Figure 1: Lack of Acculturation and Self Disclosure (Control)

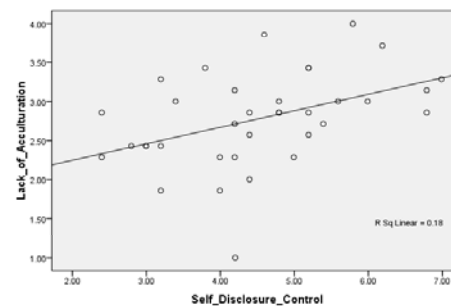
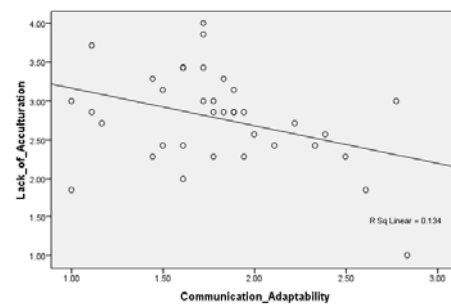


Figure 2: Lack of Acculturation and Communication Adaptability



Results

RQ1: Is communicative adaptability of non-natives to the host population related to acculturation?

There is a relationship between acculturation and communicative adaptability, $p < .05$, $r = -.37$.

RQ2: Is non-natives' self disclosure to the host population related to acculturation?

One subscale of self disclosure (Control) is correlated with acculturation, $p < .01$, $r = .43$.

The self disclosure scale as a whole, as well as three of the self disclosure subscales (Honesty, Amount, Intended) are not correlated with acculturation.

Additional findings

•Acculturation was found to be positively, significantly correlated to whether or not their current income meets their financial needs, $p < .01$, $r = .46$.

•The area in which they live, (Urban, Suburban, Rural) was positively, significantly correlated to acculturation, $p < .01$, $r = .46$, and communicative adaptability, $p < .05$, $r = 2.28$. Those residing in urban areas acculturate at a higher level and have a higher level of communicative adaptability than those in suburban or rural areas

•Level of education was significantly correlated to acculturation, $p < .05$, $r = -.35$.

•Level of community involvement was positively, significantly correlated to the amount of self disclosure, $p < .01$, $r = .46$.

Implications

Previous research has shown that when people migrate to the United States the services that are provided focus on finding them jobs and immediate monetary support. Little attention is given to the communication and social aspects of their acculturation process. Our findings emphasize the importance of the communication aspects of acculturation. Therefore, non-natives' long term acculturation would greatly benefit from institutions focusing on communication skills. These results will also facilitate international students and refugees in recognizing the importance of communication skills and how they relate to acculturation.

Acknowledgments

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