

Anecdotal Acculturation: Japanese in the Australian Duty Free, Chinese in the New Zealand *Eikaiwa*

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Schumann's Acculturation model is classed by some as sociolinguistic, (Mangubhai, 2005) and others as sociocultural (Ellis, 1997; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Pavlneko, 2000; Spolsky 1996; Thorne, 2000). Ellis specifies sociocultural models as those concentrating on the environments when and where communication in the target language (TL) is commonplace, and where the social conditions of these environments control the engagement of learners with the TL, which in turn governs the degree to which they acquire it (Ellis, 1997, p42). In the case of the Acculturation Model, the individual learner aspects of *motivation* and *ego-permeability* (aspects which will be explored further in this essay) also play a part (Schumann, 1986, p. 384).

Schumann's model was designed with immigrants to the TL country who were not undergoing formal study in mind (p. 385). Though reportedly not happy with its application to students undertaking formal studies (as cited in Spolsky, 1989, p. 145), he stated in his 1986 paper that due to research done in the model's name it seems the model has a wider scope than was first intended for it, including the study of "students...[and] instructed learners" (p. 390). This application has in turn led to the possibility of new understandings of second language acquisition (SLA) through the "process of exploration", a standpoint Schumann has generally endorsed (1993). In any case, whether looking at the groups for whom the model was originally designed, or at groups of people formally trying to acquire a L2 (who may not be migrants or wanting to become migrants), Schumann does state that careful analysis of the results can provide us with useful information about the process of acquiring a L2 (Schumann, 1986, p.393).

Focussing on the social and affective variables of Schumann's Acculturation model, this essay will look at examples of learners' ongoing acquisition of the TL (English) through:

a) the workforce without formal study

and

b) formal study only

By example, it will try to illustrate the main claims of the Acculturation model, and further, by comparing the different groups and types of learning (keeping in mind the model) it will discuss those aspects (if any) which are useful for second language teaching.

Group a (paragraph 3) are the staff, and in particular, the Japanese staff, in three duty-free institutions (Cairns Duty Free Shoppers [DFS], Sydney DFS, and Perth international airport Downtown Duty Free) in which this writer worked from 1994-2000. **Group b** are former students of this writer, who are studying or have studied formally in TL countries (in this case Australia and New Zealand), particularly Chinese students who have devoted or are devoting themselves to a lengthy study period up to and including university level in the TL country.

Schumann (1986) states that second language learning is an aspect of acculturation. The more a non-native speaker (NNS) is acculturated to the TL group the better the chances s/he has to acquire the language, though acculturation is the element that sets in motion language acquisition and is not the reason for language acquisition itself (as cited in Spolsky, 1989, p. 144). A learner's reasons for acculturating or not will depend upon his or her social and psychological "proximity or distance" with the TL group, and this proximity and distance can differ greatly for each L2 learner or group depending upon certain social and affective variables (Schumann, 1986, p. 379).

Within the Acculturation model, Schumann names two types of acculturation. The first involves NNSs who are "socially integrated with the TL group", which provides them with many opportunities to connect with TL speakers and hence the TL, which in turn gives them more chances to acquire it (1986, p. 379). The second group of NNSs are those who are attracted to the TL group and who wish to embrace certain aspects of that culture (p. 380). Either form is seen as sufficient to acquire the TL so long as there is contact with the TL group and a psychological openness in the learner. That is, the learner does not have to have the same values and way of life as the TL group to acquire the TL, but he or she does need "social and physical contact" with it (p.380).

Nine "classes of factors" are influential in second language acquisition (SLA) according to Schumann. Acculturation, consisting of two factors – social and affective - is just one of them (Schumann, 1986, p. 380, Spolsky, 1989, p. 142). The other factors are: Personality, Cognitive, Biological, Aptitude, Personal, Input and Instructional (Schumann, 1986, p. 380; see also, 1990, 1994).

The social factors of acculturation are further divided into: *social dominance patterns, integration strategies, enclosure, cohesiveness and size, congruence, attitude*, and the learner's *intended length of stay* in the TL country (1986, pp. 381-382).

Beginning with the most simple to illustrate – intended length of stay - the Japanese and other NNS workers in the duty free were, for the most part, permanent residents of Australia and therefore ideally intended to stay in Australia for the rest of their lives. Non-native speaking staff, consisting of a majority of Japanese, followed by Korean and Chinese, made up about a quarter of the staff of the Cairns store, and made up the majority of marketing, reception and shop workers in the Sydney stores. The other two most dominant groups were Korean and Chinese. They were a sizeable minority in the Perth store, also. In the case of the Japanese workers, their reasons and circumstances for being in Australia varied. Some:

- were with same-nation spouses
- had met their same-nation spouses/partners in Australia and were there on spousal or de facto visas
- had met other NNS immigrants who were not native Japanese or English speakers while there, and had married them or had a de facto visa with them
- were married to or had a de facto relationship with a native English speaker who was not always a native Australian

Others:

- had been sponsored on business visas
- were on student visas, though not all were studying English (Cairns only)
- were on working holiday visas (Cairns and Sydney)

The last three types of workers might not necessarily be in Australia permanently, though in the case of those on business and student visas, there

was a desire to be so. Nonetheless, bar one, studying English was not their reason for being in Australia. Schumann argues that if a group is to stay in an area for a lengthy period of time, its opportunities to make contact with the TL group, and therefore TL, increases and, ideally in conjunction with other factors, the L2 speaker group is more likely to acquire the L2 (1986, p.381).

A lengthy period of stay, one could argue, would also promote low *enclosure*, another of Schumann's factors, which is the degree to which the TL group and the learner group do or do not share the same "churches, schools, clubs, recreational facilities, crafts [and] professions and trades" (p. 381). Through working with native speakers, the Japanese staff, in these cases, obviously did share professions and trades with the TL group, but also with other NNSs, as well as sharing other elements of low enclosure as listed above. This was more apparent in Cairns, with a smaller population, and Perth, where the tourist trade was not as dependent upon Japanese custom, than in Sydney where the NNSs group *sizes* were larger, though not necessarily more *cohesive* – factor four of the social variables in Schumann's paper. For example, Japanese workers in Perth who had children sent them to daycare where native speaker children attended. Japanese staff socialized with NS and other staff in Cairns and Perth on weekends, at lunch and at other times. This occurred to a lesser degree in Sydney. If enclosure between the TL group and the NNS group is low and the NNS group is not large nor particularly cohesive, the chances for full language acquisition increases in relation to the increased chances for contact between the two groups. The opposite may occur if the conditions are reversed (p. 381).

Within this low enclosure, in the case of the Cairns and Perth staff, and to a lesser degree the Sydney staff, there is the implication that the TL group and the Japanese group regard each other positively. Therefore, another of Schumann's factors for likely acquisition of a second language - positive *attitude* - was met (p. 382). The Japanese, as a group, have tended to be economically better off than their fellow non-Japanese Asian immigrants which can be seen as contributing towards social dominance patterns (discussed later). Possibly stemming from this, a sense of *congruence* between the TL group and the Japanese groups was evident; maybe more so than with the Chinese and Korean groups whose economies were weaker

than Australia's at the time, and whose reasons for learning a language were perhaps more instrumentally driven due to this (discussed under affective variables), which might have contributed to feelings of their cultures being subordinate rather than equal to the Australian culture (discussed in the next paragraph). This lack of congruence can affect the levels of a group's acculturation and therefore its language acquisition.

A lengthy period of residence would mean that the NNS in their pursuance of TL acquisition would probably have adopted one of three *integration strategies: assimilation, preservation or adaptation*. Preservation tends to be a rejection of the TL culture, and therefore creates distance between the two groups which hinders language acquisition. It is highly unlikely that anyone with this viewpoint would have been working in the duty free shop, since a certain level of English, though by no means an exceedingly high one, was also expected; so saying, many of the sales and marketing staff whose daily interaction was mainly Japanese to Japanese acquired English only to a certain degree, and were in fact expected to preserve distinguishing elements of their culture, namely the complicated business and personal relations that make up Japanese business, for the sake of the company.

If a person *assimilates* to the culture, Schumann says that they give up their own culture and replace it with that of the TL group. *Adaptation*, on the other hand, is where the NNS group "adapts to the life style and values of the TL group, but maintains its own life style and values for intragroup use" (p. 381). It might be argued that those workers who had native speaker partners assimilated and those that were married to same nationality partners adapted, but that really is conjecture. It seems that adaptation was the preferred strategy amongst the Japanese I worked with, no matter who they were married to. This may have been continually reinforced, in part, because they were employed for their understanding and knowledge of Japanese language and culture. Schumann states that the learner group that assimilates probably increases its chances of acquiring the language, and those who adapt may have a more limited contact with the TL group, and so levels of acquisition might differ (p. 381). Within the duty free groups, those who mixed with native speakers and had interests outside of work that were not necessarily connected to their culture, but who preserved aspects of

their culture for intragroup use (adaptation), such as taking shoes off at the front of the house, eating with chopsticks, bringing to work and sharing traditional dishes, seemed to have a stronger acquisition of the language than those who had limited contact with native speaker groups both in the workplace and socially. The latter is a strategy that seems to fall between preservation and adaptation. Conversely, an Australian receptionist who had a Japanese partner habitually used the 'pidginized' English that she and her partner conversed in when speaking to native and non-native speaker staff alike.

The factor that seems the most important in the (non)acquisition of a second language where there is the possibility for continued contact between the TL group and NNS group is "social dominance patterns" (p. 380). If one group dominates the other in terms of politics, culture, technology and economics then there is a tendency for the dominant group to not attempt to use or learn the language (p. 381). Examples of this can be seen in much literature about Europeans, or English-speaking Chinese in pre-war China (Ballard's *Empire of the Sun*, 1984; Mah's: *Falling Leaves*, 1999), who never felt the need to learn the local language(s). Likewise, if the Japanese felt subordinate to the TL group, in this case, Australian native English speakers, they too might resist or not even attempt the TL (p. 381). Schumann's definition of people who feel or are thus dominated could probably be applied to those unwillingly under the governance of a foreign power, such as the economic power Europeans had in pre-war China, or the Japanese colonialists in Korea, or aboriginal people marginalized in their own countries, such as the Ainu in Japan, Native Americans in the USA, and Australian Aborigines.

It seems that, following Schumann's definitions, that the Japanese staff viewed themselves, and were viewed as being a more or less equal group to the TL group, especially in the workplaces, and particularly in Cairns and Sydney where the shops were reliant upon Japanese custom. In fact, so important was this custom and the money it brought in, that often it seemed it was the non-Japanese speakers, native-English speakers and others alike, who were acculturating to Japanese culture. Japanese was often the *lingua franca* in the store amongst all groups, particularly in Sydney. Interestingly enough, the weaker economies at this time of Korea and Taiwan meant there

were not so many NNSs of these two languages to accommodate the tour groups.

According to Ellis, "[s]ocio-cultural models of L2 acquisition...are intended to account for learners' relative success or failure in learning an L2. That is, they seek to explain the speed of learning and the ultimate level of proficiency of different groups of learners" (1997, p. 42). Regarding the Japanese workers I was acquainted with, there were those who had only been in Australia a few months, and those who had been in Australia for many years. Some of those who spent the majority of their time with fellow-Japanese, i.e.: some of the sales and marketing staff, tended to have poor English skills, no matter how long they had spent in the country. They could be said to be poorly-aculturated, and their language proficiency reflected this. Others, who were employed on working holiday visas, and who had more working exposure to TL speakers, improved rapidly over the three months they were employed, and their communicative English outstripped that of the aforementioned sales staff. If they were to stay in the country, and taking into account affective variables not yet discussed, their language proficiency might have continued to improve in conjunction with this contact with TL speakers. Most staff were proficient in the TL, especially in the fields of verbal communication and listening.

In contrast, many of the students I taught in Australia, and especially in New Zealand (NZ), had very little exposure to the TL outside the classroom other than their homestay, or when buying food and catching buses. I was teaching in Christchurch at a private language school called Linguis International in 2003, a time when Chinese students made up fifty percent of all foreign language learners in NZ, and a time when education was NZ's fourth most important export (Li, 2004, ¶1). Despite many of the students intending to stay in the TL country for the duration of their degree, which could be anything up to six years, including their initial years of preparation study, they had high levels of enclosure, cohesiveness and their own nation groups were large. There was not necessarily a positive attitude or a sense of congruence between the TL culture and the NNS culture. Economically, NZ greatly appreciated the money that foreign students brought in, but socially there was a lot of tension as reflected in students' own stories of racism and newspaper articles of the time¹.

Due to a language school being a language school, it will obviously attract people wanting to learn the TL, and not speakers of the TL, apart from the teachers. Due to the level of English, study commitments, and visa requirements many students could not get work locally, as the Korean and Japanese students did. Due to lack of money and/or the need for company, the Chinese tended to shift out of their homestays, most of which were native New Zealander, fairly quickly and shift in with one another. All of these factors lessen exposure to the TL and therefore, according to the model, lessen the learners' chances of acquiring the language and increasing their proficiency in it.

Many events were planned for the foreign student community in Christchurch and many services were made available in both Mandarin and English, which would have brought the Chinese students into contact with aspects of the TL culture and encouraged a greater level of the integration strategy of adaptation, and so, in theory, greater exposure to and chance of acquiring the TL more fully yet, anecdotally, students at the school at which I taught rarely availed themselves of these services or events despite expressing wishes to make NS friends and despite commenting that there was nothing to do on weekends.

"Acculturation as a remote cause brings the learner into contact with TL...speakers. Verbal interaction with those speakers as a proximate cause brings about the negotiation of appropriate input which, then, operates as the immediate cause of language acquisition" (Schumann 1986, p. 385). As the students had very limited verbal interaction, their language fluency and listening seemed to fossilize at a very carefully graded point. This point might possibly have been that of their English teacher's very carefully graded English. However, their grammar knowledge and test taking skills, which included writing and reading comprehension, improved.

Within this writer's experience, even once the students had finally enrolled in their foundation courses, or first year university courses, those who were studying business and who revisited the language school said that the courses were 80% NS Asian, with the majority being Chinese, leaving one to wonder if the students ever really had any proximity with TL users at all despite being in the TL country for an extended period of time. This could explain the low group levels of listening capability, restricted

vocabulary and stilted conversation. If one looks at the model's discussion on social variables, it states that acquisition depends upon learners' opportunities to make informal contact with the TL culture and therefore, the target language.

Schumann's social variables are intended to be applied to a L2 group in a TL country as a whole, and there were certain Chinese learners whose listening and speaking greatly improved, particularly those who continued to stay with their homestays, and those who had a positive attitude towards the TL culture, and those who, while remaining cohesive within their learner group, allowed in other nationality learners.

In contrast to the social variables, the affective variables are applicable to individuals acquiring, or not acquiring, a language (Schumann, 1986, p.382). He lists them as: *language shock and cultural shock, motivation and ego-permeability*. Language shock is where learners fear appearing inept and comical, and where they are unsure if their words ever really say what they want them to say (p. 382). Under this condition, due to lack of language skills in the TL, learners are also potentially deprived of the satisfaction of attracting positive attention they would normally gain through their native languages (p. 382). I taught at a small school which had an 'English only' policy which involved the students signing a contract to this end. The school was small enough to actually govern this policy and, even though not always the majority of students enrolled, it was the Chinese who most often paid the fine for not speaking English. Of course, this situation may have just applied to the eighteen month period in which I taught. Within that time though, with a few exceptions, this group was most likely to not sit with students from other nationalities, where English use would have been necessary and which kept the cohesiveness of their group tight, and lessened the chances for language acquisition. So saying, they were often, though not always, much younger than the other students and their reasons for studying tended to be different (discussed in next section). When asked why they did not speak English with each other, even though this construct is highly artificial, they stated that they felt foolish doing so. The students who tried their hardest to speak English, no matter what, were those who gained the language the fastest. In contrast, the NNS of the duty free shops, (of whom many were immigrant Chinese), had had to overcome their language shock

or they would not have acquired a job with those institutions and the same applies to cultural shock which will be discussed below.

Cultural shock is something most humans feel when moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar – it is a loss of all that defines us, and as such, can lead, amongst others things, to negative attitudes towards the self, TL language and culture which, in the case of the latter two points, the NNSs may blame for their state of discomfort and distress (p. 383). Many of the Chinese students were in NZ because their parents wanted them to be there. They missed their families and culture and were often apathetic and hostile towards acquiring a new language as a result. This had the potential to heighten their culture shock and to also negatively affect their attitude towards the language.

Drawing on Gardner & Lambert's research, the affective variable "*motivation*" is explained in terms of being "integrative" or "instrumental". An integratively-motivated learner generally has a real desire to communicate with, and curiosity about, the TL culture, perhaps to the extent of becoming like its speakers. An instrumentally-motivated learner will try to acquire the language for other purposes, such as educational, instructional, or for business (Spolsky, 1989, p. 137; Schumann, 1986, p. 383). She or he does not necessarily study the TL because she or he has any great liking for it. As a teenager who has failed to gain a place in school or university in highly competitive China, many of the students actually had no great love of study. Compared to their fellow students, many of whom were on working holiday visas, and many of whom were independent and older, and often studying English for pleasure, the Chinese students tended to be more instrumentally motivated. In this writer/teacher's experience, what was most important to the members of the Chinese group was the passing of exams and the acquiring of the degree so that, for the most part, they could return home to their country and hopefully get a good job. The concept of passing exams often did not take into account the successful end result of pronunciation exercises or communicative exercises which meant that many students did not see the undertaking of these exercises, as suiting their purposes. This brought about a mismatch of student expectations and NZ teaching styles (Li, 2004), and often meant that, especially in the fields of listening and fluency, particularly pronunciation, the learners did not

improve. They could not see the point of learning such things, particularly at the language school level where they were not really exposed to the TL in a day-to-day form, and so did not encounter the NS input needed, according to the acculturation model, to increase their proficiency in English. For example, a NNS who finds that his or her English is not understood may respond to this input and try his or her best to overcome the problem so he or she is understood. Often in a language school an experienced teacher can understand what a NS may not, and so the student may never get the "verbal interaction" needed to acquire a more comprehensible pronunciation. In comparison, those working in the duty free had to understand the English of customers and supervisors, and in turn, had to have their English understood. Therefore, their English in these respects was proficient. Naturally enough, the English acquisition of the duty free workers was also instrumental as it ensured them their jobs, but it was combined with integrative purposes, especially if their partners were native speakers, or they had developed contacts with TL speakers, or they were students of other disciplines.

The final affective variable listed is "ego-permeability". This is a term coined by Guiora (1972, cited in Schumann, 1986, p. 384) whereby one must be uninhibited enough to be open to the TL input - one's "language-ego" cannot become too rigid, or acculturation, and therefore full SLA, will not occur. For example, within the classroom setting one might see a mixture of a failure of ego-permeability and too strong a language shock when Asian students feel too uncomfortable to place the tongue between the teeth for the /th/ sound of bath, or an English speaker feels too uncomfortable to make the deep guttural /k/ sound, as in loch in Arabic, and so, acquisition of this sound does not occur. In fact, if any of the above elements are too strong and cannot be overcome (in the case of culture shock and language shock), or too weak or poorly applied (in the case of motivation), acculturation will be diminished, and therefore the chances of acquiring the L2 will also decrease (p. 384).

The Acculturation Model can only really be applied to the environment or input of a classroom, and in the process of ascertaining student reasons for studying and trying to create lessons that match these wishes. In a classroom, Learners can get exposure to the TL, possibly without the effects of language and culture shock that they might not at first be able to

overcome, if they learn their language entirely without any formal study. In this circumstance, ego-permeability is potentially "opened up". A student who did work locally and was exposed to NZ culture and felt that he gained great "practical" knowledge of "casual" English also felt it was important that he had first gained a certain level of English before he eased his way into the workforce (Tahara, R., personal communications, January 15, 2005 [see appendix 1]). The student can decide the level and amount of contact he or she wishes to have with the TL once he or she feels more comfortable with his or her level of language. The school itself can help with this level of contact through practical excursions where learners use their TL with TL speakers. Schools which offer flexibility within their semesters to allow for explorative holidays of the target language country, or which themselves take their students on such trips, can also stimulate contact with and hence acquisition of the TL. Students can be encouraged to participate in activities outside the classroom where they can use their language, and bring their experiences back into the classroom. In fact, in this writer's experience, it makes the classroom far more interesting. Within the classroom, as an adaptation of the model, activities such as visits by local people, or the use of realia can bring the target language closer to the students and hence stimulate its acquisition. Practical exercises which arouse interest and invoke the use of the TL are also useful, such as cooking lessons, art lessons, gardening lessons.

Even if the immigrants talked about in Schumann's model are not formally studying, one would guess that not all the idealized speakers of the model are absolute beginners when one looks at the SLA of English. Considering the global use of English, many immigrants surely would have studied the language in some shape of form in their native countries, leaving one to wonder if exposure to the TL is actually the causative effect of acquisition of the TL, or if it opens the schema of prior knowledge, which will also encourage acquisition (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1987; Hadley, 2001; Widdowson; 1984). Exposure to TL provides learners with input, and often what they do or do not do with this input depends upon the variables Schumann has listed.

From my own experience of learning Japanese both formally and informally, it seems the Acculturation model really emphasises the need for

the learner to be active in the TL culture if he or she wants to gain a practical and integrative usage of the TL. If this is what the students themselves are after, as stated before, encouraging a stimulating and safe environment in the classroom is maybe the best way to nurture a psychological closeness to the TL culture and language, which the learners themselves can then take into the social field, thereby increasing their chances to acculturate and so to become practically more proficient in their chosen second languages.

Notes

- 1 Chinese students made up fifty percent of foreign language learners in 2003 but felt that there was lack of care for them as reported in the Asian EFL journal, and that they were seen merely as a means of earning money. Widespread anti-NZ articles swept through China in 2003 on the basis of reports about pastoral care (Li, 2004). On the other hand, many New Zealanders felt that Asian students, and particularly the Chinese (since they made up the great number of foreign language learners, they were bound to have higher representation) were failing to understand and adapt to crucial parts of NZ life, such as responsible driving. These attitudes, and the dispelling of the 'facts' behind them, were still being reported in 2005 (Booker).

Appendix 1

Correspondence with Ryosuke Tahara.

Ryosuke Tahara's replies about his choice to work part-time in a NS environment in New Zealand after having completed some formal study.

- Did you feel that your speaking skills and listening skills improved during this time? If so, how, and why do you think that they did?

Answer) Yes, I did. In my case, I needed to catch commands of my supervisor. Of course, they were given me in English and supervisors spoke natural English (which mean, their speaking is very fast). Actually, I did not understand what they said sometimes but tried to understand otherwise I would be fired. However, it made my listening skills improve. Besides, I worked with a lot of colleagues at the time, so, I talked with them everyday. Therefore, there are a lot of opportunities to improve English.

- Do you think it is a good idea for foreign language learners to get jobs where English is spoken? Was it good for you, and if so, why?

Answer) Yes, I do because of above reasons. There are a lot of chances to use English, which is very casual.

- Do you feel that you understood New Zealand culture more while you were working? If so, why?

Answer) Yes, I do. I got many knowledge though working. Of course, we can get knowledge about New Zealand from school activities and so on, but working taught me about other things, for example, New Zealander's working style, wage and tax etc... I think we don't learn about them in school. When I worked there, I joined Christmas party hotel organized and it was very excited I understood what is local style Christmas. Besides, sometimes my colleagues invited me to their house and had a dinner together. I think it's more fun because in school case, there are so many Japanese but at that time, I was only Japanese.

- What helped you more with your English, formal study or working? Why?

Answer) I think both of them play different roles for English study. Formal study is necessary to build up basic English skills and knowledges. Those are also necessary to find Job because if people do not have basic English skills and knowledges, they would not be able to get any Job. Besides, sometimes colleagues use very casual style English and sometimes they are kind of swearwords, so, I think it's not so good way to study English from working earlier than formal study. Therefore, I think Working can play just practical roles.

How do you think my answers? If it's difficult to understand, feel free to contact with me anytime.

Thanks

Best regards
Ryosuke

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