

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UK IMMIGRANTS LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF ESOL CLASSES

Pundziuvienė Daiva, Matulionienė Juratė

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania; Boston Lithuanian School Ruta, GB

It is widely accepted that, in the United Kingdom, thousands of women, men and children continuously confront challenges to their identity and sense of well being as they immigrate and acculturate into a new way of life, where language proficiency opens doors to social acceptance, economic security and cultural understanding. The needs of and provisions for adult immigrants to learn English include specific considerations for the recently arrived and those who have been living in the UK for a rather long time but still do not speak English; those in a wide variety of work situations, such as looking for a job or wanting to start a new career; those undergoing cultural shock and acculturation in a new country; those who have a low self-esteem because native speakers do not want to communicate with immigrants or these vulnerable and often disadvantaged learners suffer from a psychological barrier themselves. While most learning of English takes place in informal contexts and the English-speaking environment, formal institutions in the UK and immigrants' native countries can also offer useful language training. With the above observations in mind, the present study aims at exploring the UK immigrants' perceptions, needs and experiences concerning learning English within the curricula of ESOL courses at Boston ESOL Courses in regard to the attitudes of the students who attend these courses. The analysis includes the attitudes of Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Latvian learners of English and is written from the perspective of the teacher who works with and teaches this diverse group of adults. The research questions concern the learners' experience of learning English at ESOL courses, their expectations and opportunities for learning English in the UK and their native countries, the employment of inclusive teaching strategies, which give every learner an equal opportunity to access the learning experience, the use of ICT as a bridge to enhance learning for ESOL students and their children or family members who would like to

study their parents' mother tongue by attending language and culture courses in their native countries institutions in the distant or blended mode. This study also explores main obstacles to learning English, such as immigrants' reflections of the way native speakers treat non-native speakers of English and how these factors have affected their learning of English. The research methodology is based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis.