Language in the United States

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**Background**

One of the things that struck me on arrival into the United States was the many different languages that were being used and the people of many different nationalities that spoke these languages. My native country majorly uses one language and it would be difficult to find people using different languages. Let us take for example when you take a stroll to China Market in the U.S one gets a true experience of the Chinese culture and their language. This experience is not just limited to the Chinese Market but also in their restaurants, one would be confused and convinced that they are in China and not in the U.S. this extends to Indian restaurants where one can get served different cuisines according to the Indian culture. This integration of cultures surprised me for everyone seemed to embrace what one offered and it appeared that what one community lacked the other compensated in having it. A particular aspect of the cultures and language that caught my eye was the different accents of the “American English” that were in use in the American setting. Once I paid a visit to the various suburbs especially in the City of Chicago, I was introduced to the American slang that was majorly used by residents who were mainly of the African-American decent. Literally it is extremely difficult to experience a language barrier in the United States due to this integration of cultures. **Language in the United States is one interesting subject given that there is no official language that is defined in the constitution as the language of the land. This could be reason for the easy integration of other languages in the U.S.**

**Analysis**

Culture shock is the feeling of confusion or uncertainty when an individual is in contact with culture that may different from that of place of origin. After getting a chance to go and study in the United States of America, I experienced culture shock that manifested in the context of language. I had a tough time communicating with my peers which ended up making me feel lonely and alone. The culture shock can best be explained using the sociological concepts or theories. One of the theory that can explain the culture shock is cultural identity theory which argues that a person has a high sense of belonging to a given group or culture (Seidler, 2010). With culture identity theory, a person gets ingrained to certain traditions or cultural aesthetics. This makes a person to stick to cultural identities and may experience the shock when he/she goes to a different place with dissimilar culture.

Another important theory that can help in explaining the cultural shock is social action theory which posits that the actions of individuals whether it is their language or rather what they eat is determined by the social background. The interactions between people play a critical role in shaping the personal identity of the individuals. In the context of language barrier, growing in a community that spoke one language makes it difficult to communicate in a different language when moving to a new destination.

In addition, another important sociological assumption is the structural perspective theory which differs from the social action theory in that human behavior which comprises the way people communicate largely depends on the society in which people reside (Seidler, 2010). The society is a product of human activity where the human behavior is shaped by the structural aspects of the society. Considering this my experience could be explained by the fact that I found myself in a new society.

Nevertheless, Hofstede cultural dimension theory helps in explaining the effects a given community may have on the culture of the key members and how some of these values may affect the behavior. The differences in the culture may make it difficult for one to reach the level of cross-cultural communication. Cultural differences can be viewed in the context of nuisance especially when they are delimiting. In such a case, I was not able to communicate across the divide due to cultural differences.

Finally, the culturalist argument in the context of modernization theory may explain my culture shock. The theory argues that traditional societies such as the one I come from are characterized by the astrictive tendency where there is limited social contact that go beyond the family and the community level (Seidler, 2010). This makes it difficult to communicate using the language of place of destination.

**Conclusion**

As described earlier, English is the most spoken language in the U.S (Fishman, 2014), but the loophole in terms of absence of description of an official language may come as a blessing to the country. Many cultures are now able to thrive within the United States and this makes it possible for people with lots of talent from various parts of the world to settle and work within this great country. Language is one of the most important components of any culture, for language tends to act as a bridge between people and helps to promote understanding (Mencken, 2013). My background only championed the use of one language for it viewed other languages and cultures as a threat. America’s embracing of other cultures openly pretty surprised me in a huge way, but I now appreciate the thinking behind this model.

References

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