

# **Acculturation, enculturation, and newcomers' English language proficiencies in Canada**

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The acculturation process is a series of cultural and psychological adjustments involving detachment from heritage cultural norms and adaptation to new cultural contexts (Berry, 1992), while heritage enculturation consists of maintaining one's heritage cultural norms and values. It has been reported that acculturation predicts second language (L2) literacy skills (Jia et al., 2014; Rafieyan, 2016), influences educational outcomes (Sheikh & Anderson, 2018), and bolsters confidence in language use within immersive cultural environments (Wong, 2015).

In the present study, we examine how acculturation and enculturation among newcomers in Canada are associated with their language proficiency skills within the framework of language policy and educational development. Fifty-six ( $N = 56$ ) newcomers in Canada who had settled in the country within the past 5 years prior to the data collection were administered an acculturation measure (Cuéllar et al., 1995), the Woodcock-Johnson passage comprehension test (Woodcock et al., 2001), and a vocabulary size test (Nation & Beglar, 2007). Qualitative responses regarding participants' opinions about the perceived effectiveness of language classes in Canada were elicited.

Results from Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses showed that acculturation positively correlated with both vocabulary knowledge ( $r = .422, p = .028$ ) as well as reading comprehension ( $r = .650, p < .001$ ), and significantly predicted comprehension scores ( $\beta = .650, p < .001, R^2 = .422, F(1, 50) = 36.558, p < .001$ ), and English vocabulary knowledge ( $\beta = .422, p < .001, R^2 = .178, F(1, 25) = 5.430, p < .028$ ). Although enculturation was negatively correlated with English vocabulary knowledge,  $r = -.285$ , it did not significantly predict vocabulary knowledge in the regression model ( $\beta = -.285, p = .150, R^2 = .081, F(1, 25) = 2.202, p < .150$ ). Furthermore, there was a significant negative correlation between enculturation and English reading comprehension. The perceived value derived from specific types of language courses did not show a significant predictive relationship with English vocabulary size or reading comprehension.

The findings highlight the influence of acculturation on language proficiency and comprehension for Canadian newcomers, underscoring the need for language education policies that foster cultural integration to enhance language learning. While the perceived value from language classes was not a significant predictor, it remains an essential aspect of language education that requires further exploration. The relationships between cultural adjustment and English proficiency skills are discussed to reflect on a balanced consideration of heritage language maintenance in language policy.

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