

A Smooth Journey to Integration? A Case Study of Integration of English Proficient Chinese Immigrants in Canada

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Abstract: This study looks at how a group of English-proficient Chinese immigrants perform professionally and socially, particularly how they deal with major issues in their process of integration in Canada. It draws on Berry's (1997, 2003, 2005) theories and studies on acculturation, Boski's (2006, 2008) conceptualizations of integration and Fong and Ooka's (2006) immigrant integration patterns. Interview method is used to collect the data. The study helps to understand the myth that language is a determining factor for a successful integration. Though proficient English allows these immigrants to live a complementary parallel life, it still takes time for them to be able to behave in accordance with the expectations of the new cultural environment to be full participants of Canada. The data also reveal that the rising economic power of home culture plays a noticeable role in these immigrants' integration.

Keywords: Integration, language proficiency, English-proficient Chinese immigrants

1. Introduction

According to Statistics Canada (2006), in the census conducted in 2006, the Chinese Immigrant population was about 470, 000, second only to Britain in terms of place of birth. In a body of literature discussing the problems immigrants may face, language proficiency is identified as one of the major barriers. It has been found in many studies that a proficient language of the receiving society is associated with success in further education (Yang, Noels & Saumure, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011), easy access to and success in employment (Bauder, 2005; Shan, 2009; Shan & Guo, 2013), and finally, successful integration (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Yu & Shen, 2012). Among the skills sought is the existing proficiency in French and/or English. This leads to a common belief that if an immigrant has proficiency in the language of the host culture, he/she is likely to be successful in the host society, and if language, the paramount and insurmountable problem is solved, what an immigrant desires will be quite reachable. In fact, the language-proficient immigrants may face just as many obstacles as those with little or without English, but their problems have often been overlooked, as most programs as well as studies focus on helping immigrants with very poor language proficiency.

This study aims to address the gap in research and in practice by bringing in focus a group of English-proficient Chinese immigrants to Canada. The researchers intend to contribute

in two-ways: first, to understand how language proficient immigrants, new or long-term, perform professionally and socially in the process of integration in Canada; second, to provide information to the research community and the policy makers on the factors that can facilitate or hinder this group of immigrants' full participation in their new country.

2. Integration as an Acculturation Strategy

Acculturation occurs when "groups of individuals having different backgrounds come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups." (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, pp. 149-150). Such contact could take the form of colonization, domination of indigenous people, military invasion, and migration, to name just a few. In an era of globalization, acculturation has become a daily reality for individuals in a culturally diversified society. Individuals with different cultures try to accommodate to each other in order to live together, and the difference lies only in the course they take, the levels of difficulty they encounter, and the extent of the eventual outcome (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

Berry discussed acculturation in two dimensions: the maintenance of home culture and the acquisition of a host culture. It is an individual's preference to home/host culture and his/her involvement in day-to-day intercultural encounters that lead to four "acculturation strategies": assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation (AIMS) (Berry & Sabatier, 2010, p. 191).

Numerous studies have found that integration is present for all types of acculturating groups (Neto, 2002; Sayegh & Lasry, 1993), and integration is usually believed to be the most successful mode of acculturation or end result for a host society. Those who pursue and accomplish integration appear to be better adapted (Berry, 2005, pp. 708-709). Therefore, integration has been widely acclaimed as a desirable outcome in intercultural contact and the most preferred course in acculturation (Berry, 2003 & 2005). Some researchers even claim that for the potential advantages of migration to be maximized, it is crucial that immigration is accompanied by integration (Froy, 2006, p. 32).

Integration in Berry's model of acculturative strategies implies a strong sense of belonging to the background culture together with a strong identification with the mainstream culture. While acknowledging Berry's attitudinal preference as a legitimate construct, Boski (2008, pp. 145-151) added in his discussion four other conceptualizations. Integration is understood as 1) a cognitive-evaluative merger of two cultural sets (Boski, 2006). Individuals pursue integration while perceiving and evaluating the two cultures they participate in. 2) functional (partial) specialization (Arends-Toth, 2003). Separation mode is specifically reserved for home/family life and in order to maintain psychological continuity and stability, and assimilation mode for survival at workplace or public life in a larger society. Different modes are kept for different functions and integration is just a combination of modes. 3) bicultural competence and frame switching (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002). Integration requires being able to function in one cultural domain or another through a proper switch and 4) constructive marginalization (Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Bennett, 2004) "where the movements in and out of cultures are necessary for a positive self-identity (Boski, 2008, p. 150).

Fong and Ooka (2006, p. 350) enriched the notion of integration by systematically comparing three major immigrant integration patterns: zero-sum, pluralist, and selective integration. The first pattern assumes that as immigrants increase their participation in the wider society socially, economically and politically, their participation in ethnic activities would decrease. The Pluralist pattern argues that it is impossible for immigrants to cut off their ethnic ties and give up their ethnic practices partly because of the transnational nature of immigrants' adaptation, and partly because ethnic ties are beneficial to their economic achievement in the host country, especially given today's technology in instant communication. The third, Selective integration pattern contends that "individuals actively choose to define their ethnic boundaries by choosing their own preferred levels of social participation in both ethnic community and the wider society in order to maintain certain aspects of their social distinctiveness" (p. 354).

In the four meanings and three patterns discussed above, it is found that integration suggests more than preference. Flexibility in choosing the involvement in either culture (constructive marginalization and selective integration pattern) and some degree of combination (merger of two sets of culture and combination of modes) enable individuals to switch between two cultures and purposefully choose to identify with the ethnic community or local community which is the best for a positive construction of self-identity.

3. Language Proficiency and Integration

As language serves as one of the major tools that allows one to interact in and come to identify with a second language community, it is believed to have a direct impact on acculturation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Martinovic, Tubergen & Maas, 2011). To immigrants, language proficiency is no doubt a major asset.

A good command of the language of a receiving society facilitates developing contacts in that society, and having contacts from the mainstream group increases immigrants' language proficiency. Immigrants with a greater comfort in using the language of the host society are more likely to take advantage of what they can open up to. Knowing the language(s) may help enlarge networks and opportunities, and increase the likelihood of successful social integration for immigrants (Boyd & Cao, 2009, p. 64).

On the contrary, a low level of proficiency is likely to encourage association within one's own ethnic group, and dissociation from the host culture contributes to less ability to meet daily needs in a new society, thus slowing down one's socio-cultural adjustment (Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). When identifying immigrant-specific factors, Boyd (1999) and Adamuti-Trache (2011) also point out that a lack of familiarity with the host country language(s) makes immigrants less effective in incorporating into local labor markets, causing problems of unemployment, underemployment, a retarded social integration and most important of all, possible exclusion from mainstream society. Therefore, an ease in using the language of the host country is very often indicative of better adjustment and a successful integration is normally dependent on the ability to use the language of the nation (Cray & Currie, 2004, p. 51), and the process of integration "must include an explicit focus on language." (Patten & Kymlicka, 2003, p. 9 cited from Cray & Currie, 2004).

Proficiency in one of its two official languages (English and French) is not only an important

criterion for the selection of immigrants to Canada, but also a key determinant of integration in Canadian society (Kilbridea & Ali, 2010). Based on such perception, the Canadian government has sponsored numerous language centers “to enable newcomers to settle, adapt and integrate as quickly and comfortably as possible so that they may become contributing members of Canadian society” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC, 2002).

As our research participants are adult immigrants whose cultural values have already been established and somewhat firmly embedded, a total assimilation seems unlikely. Moreover, their good English proficiency also precludes separation and marginalization at least technically speaking. So our study focuses on their integration: the achievements they made, the problems they encountered, the solutions they came up with, and the factors contributing to their successful integration into the Canadian society.

4. Discrimination and Integration

Berry et al. (2006)’s study on immigrant youth rank the discrimination they perceived in such an ascending order: those who seek integration report the least amount of discrimination, those seeking assimilation experience relatively low discrimination, those seeking separation have relatively high discrimination, and whole those who are marginalized encounter the most. Discrimination and integration are closely related. Dion (2001)’s research done several years earlier also has similar finding — “the greater the perceived discrimination, the less successful the immigrants’ incorporation into a receiving society” (p. 524).

Perceived discrimination may be defined as the situation in which “an individual feels that they have been treated unfairly because of their membership of a particular social category” (Banerjee, 2008, p. 384). The subjective experience of unequal treatment could be perceived at ethnic group level or encountered in a wide variety of specific contexts at individual level. Perceived discrimination may be under rather than over-reported as identifying how discriminations are subjectively considered and actually processed is challenging.

Brettell (2011) compares and discusses everyday discrimination different ethnic groups perceived, encountered and experienced — discrimination in workplace, discrimination in neighborhoods and communities, discrimination in a minority context. She found that discrimination did not limit to “phenotypical racial characteristics, but also about language abilities, class position, immigration status, foreignness, and personhood” (p. 266). In the five variables Banerjee (2008) identifies as crucial to an immigrant’s perception of discrimination, the level of education is believed to raise one’s expectations for success in career and increase one’s awareness of inequalities in society (Kessler et al., 1999; Cardarelli et al., 2007). Educated immigrants are more likely to expect to be valued as their education, qualifications and skills promise, and if they find that they feel the otherwise, they tend to believe that discrimination is “at play” (Banerjee, 2008, p. 386).

As has been made clearly in the discussion of acculturation possibilities, a likely path for our adult immigrants who are proficient in English is integration. Therefore, we expect them to experience or perceive not so considerable amount of discrimination in their professional and social life though it follows that the education one receives increase the degree of sensitivity towards discrimination they may have experienced.

5. Participants and Data Collection

Two groups of English proficient Chinese immigrants (all from Mainland China) were recruited across Canada. These participants included in this study have to meet one of the following requirements: they were either English majors in China, or their working language was English, or they passed certain internationally recognized English proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL or GRE, to name a few, before they immigrated to Canada.

There are 10 participants in each group. Access to participants was gained through the researchers' personal networks, then snowballing. Among these 20 participants, there are 6 males and 14 females, including 6 professional occupations in Canada (college instructor/ professor, data analyst, federal employee, crown enterprise manager, health practitioner, and public administrator).

Name	Gender	Education /Profession / Proficiency before Coming to Canada	Education/Degree Received in Canada	Occupation Now
Lynnette	Female	English major/Univ. teacher/ IELTS		University administrator
Martha	Female	English major / Univ. English teacher	Ph. D candidate	Student
Gabby	Female	Master obtained in European Union	Master	School board advisor
Veronica	Female	English teacher	Master	Public administrator
Dolly	Female	English major/ Univ. English teacher	Master, Ph. D candidate	Student
Joyce	Female	TOEFL, GRE	Master	Crown enterprise manager
Jane	Female	TOEFL	BA	University administrator
Ray	Male	TOEFL	BA	Public administrator
Karlee	Female	TOEFL	Master	Housewife
Max	Male	TOEFL	Master, Ph. D	Data analyst
Alexandria	Female	Biology major/ TOEFL	Master	Health administrator
Selina	Female	Japanese major/ TOEFL	Master	Crown enterprise manager
Wanda	Female	Computer major/ TOEFL, GRE	Master	University instructor
Laura	Female	English teacher/ TOEFL	Master	University administrator
Zoe	Female	TOEFL, IELTS, GRE	Master, Ph. D	University professor
Bill	Male	English major/ Univ. administrator	Master	Health administrator
Brian	Male	English major/ Univ. English teacher	Master	Federal assessor
Lisa	Female	Univ. teacher/ TOEFL, GRE	Master	Health practitioner
Tony	Male	Bank/TOEFL, GRE	Master, Ph. D	University professor
Sam	Male	Univ. teacher/ TOEFL, GRE	Master	Health practitioner
Patricia	Female	Univ. English teacher	Master, Ph. D	University professor

One of the criteria for classifying participants is their length of stay in Canada regardless how long they have been an immigrant. Those who came to Canada after the year 2000 are classified as new immigrants and put in the first group. Those who came to Canada in 1980s or 1990s are in the second group. The reason for choosing the year 2000 is because at that time China started to emerge as an economic power and Canada started to see a significant increase of immigrants coming from Mainland China: According to the 2006 census, 155,105 Chinese immigrants migrated to Canada between 2001 and 2006, out of a total of 466,940 Chinese immigrant population (Statistics Canada, 2006).

In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out. Questions (Appendix) were open-ended and probing, and participants could lead the discussion in certain parts. Face-to-face interviews were conducted if the participants and the researchers were in the same city, and Skype was adopted if participants were elsewhere in Canada. On average, the interviews were about one hour long, and were recorded and then transcribed for data analysis. Participants could speak whichever language (English or Chinese) they feel comfortable with. Most of them chose to speak Chinese, because they feel that speaking Chinese could help fully express themselves. Pseudonyms are used for all participants in the discussion section of this paper. The transcripts are translated from Mandarin Chinese into English.

The semi-structured interview is so designed that the domains of acculturation can be explored and their psychological and social cultural adjustment can be probed into: language, discrimination, social relationships, media preference, attachments to cultural groups, and preferred ethnic label (Appendix).

6. Data Analysis

The data collected is analyzed in the following two aspects: English proficiency and their professional life; English proficiency and their social life. We try to find out that to what extent their proficient English helps them make progress and deal with the problems in their professional life and social life respectively, and most importantly, through data analysis, we hope to capture the patterns of integration for these groups of immigrants.

6.1. English Proficiency and Their Professional Life

It is believed that “immigrants who arrive in Canada with sufficient language skills will find themselves well placed to take advantage of all the opportunities their new home has to offer” (CIC, 2012). These immigrants, old and new, all agree that if they didn’t have such a strong language competence, they couldn’t have got such a job that requires high English proficiency. As a matter of fact, their English and their job requirements are mutually helpful and reciprocal, and the good language proficiency is likely to take them to a high level of proficiency. Here is what they say about their on-the-job English improvement.

Lynnette is a highly proficient English speaker, and a conscientious learner. “You are making progress every day. You are learning in doing, in writing, and in reading...When you see good expressions in the emails, you will accumulate them and use them next time in your email purposefully.” Indeed, knowing the language(s) of the destination country increases the

utilization of education in the work-place (Bleakley & Chin, 2004; Chiswick & Miller, 2002).

Brian, an immigrant over 20 years, recalled with gratitude his early experience in a call center. "When I don't understand something, my boss would explain it to me. ...Local people and experts sitting side by side provided me with one on one help." Brian is a curious and eager learner. "In the past 20 years, my greatest reward and satisfaction is derived from learning". From the courses he taught, the job he took, he is constantly improving his English like creating a mosaic mural, "bits by bits, pieces by pieces, diligently and patiently."

These immigrants tend to make positive comments about their professional experiences. Joyce said she was lucky to have very helpful and supportive colleagues. "They could understand as a non-native speaker, it is not easy for me to work as their colleague. But on my part, I always have a learning attitude, and at the same time contributing my professional knowledge. ...They are very willing to help. ...I feel that they are like mentors to me, and I'm an apprentice." Selina echoes Joyce's story. "My colleague taught me everything she knew. At first I would ask her how to do something, and then I would try to find out if there is a better way to do it, and share with her."

Thanks to their previous command of proficient English, they are seldom deskilled. On the contrary, they are more likely to be valued and enjoyed as contributing members at workplace. They owe their linguistic and professional progress to a common attitude of gratefulness for the opportunity to work at a professional job, in addition to the attitude of eagerness to learn.

6.2. Perceived Discrimination in Their Professional Life

Discrimination is a sensitive issue. Perceived discrimination has been found to be an important predictor of acculturation attitudes, orientations and outcomes (Lindert, Korzilius, van de Vijver, Kroon & Arends-Toth, 2008). For an immigrant in a new culture, perceiving oneself as a victim of discrimination by members of a dominant group will affect whether he/she would like to orient to or stay away from the larger society (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006).

Our participants seem to view and respond to perceived or real discrimination in a more objective way. Almost all the interviewees acknowledged that discrimination was a universal problem though there was rarely overt discrimination in Canada, at least in their professional environment. What is in common in their recounts is their refusal to attach the label of discrimination to whatever unpleasant experience they went through, and their attitude toward discrimination influences their way of handling it.

Laura said after a restructuring of the organization, instead of being upgraded, her department where most employees were non-native speakers was downgraded. She felt that it is so natural for her to have discrimination as the scapegoat. Instead she asked herself: "Am I too sensitive to this? Is it because our report was not written in the way they expected?" By asking such a question, she and her department focused on producing a better job in the future rather than harbouring a deep resentment of not being recognized properly.

Brian examined the cause of his two setbacks in his career. When he did not get the promotion he expected, he wondered: "Why has this happened to me? Is it because I'm a Chinese?" He made an objective evaluation about his performance and concluded that he was not ready for that position yet. "Sometimes you cannot take it too seriously. Don't try to

attribute discrimination to whatever happens to you. Doing this will only hurt you and make yourself feel wronged.”

His initial reaction to his second setback was also discrimination. “Then I persuaded myself: I cannot prove it is or it is not. Don’t bother yourself with something you cannot prove. Just move on.” He later got a job in the federal government and he is busy and happy till now.

When dealing with discrimination, some immigrants are not willing to take things lying down. Instead of moaning all day long, they choose to fight back. When Bill, an old immigrant, first stepped into the workplace, he was the only Chinese from mainland China. Though he was professionally strong and linguistically proficient, he was reluctant to express his view. More often than not, he was misunderstood and he met with a crisis in his professional life. “When you don’t know much about their culture, you are not so confident. When you are not confident, you guard more and contribute less,” he now explains. Bill chose to turn to the union. “I appealed to the union for the unfair treatment I underwent. My problem was solved and I was transferred to a higher level position in another department. When I was finally transferred back to my former department, I have already proved my ability to respond to the crisis in the right way. My life is much easier ever since.”

When they were unable to manage the stress brought by the discrimination, perceived or real, Brian and Bill sought a psychiatrist’s professional help. Their proficient English enabled them to articulate their problems in a medical office, and to them, talking has so much healing power.

Though some Chinese characteristics of not being too critical to the social system, attributing the temporary ill treatment to their own not being good enough, trying to be twice as good as locals to get a good job are still found in these immigrants, their proficient English gives them the confidence that they will sooner or later outgrow that stage and be valued as contributing members in the host society, and they are able to deal with the discrimination in a different way than less proficient immigrants are likely to do, such as seeking professional help, and challenging the authorities and combating it.

However, even with the language skill, it is not enough to deal with the issue of discrimination and other knowledge is also needed such as rules and laws of the land and one’s rights and responsibilities. Clearly, another aspect of training other than language is needed in place: they need training in understanding discrimination and fighting it rather than simply moving on as in the case of Laura’s (they were more likely to get it over), and finally to help achieve social justice and a more fair society.

6.3. English Proficiency and Their Social Life

Social life here is understood as a separate or different domain from professional life, the formal or informal activities these immigrants take part in within a larger society, and the daily contacts they come into with local people outside of their workplace. In order to understand the process of immigrant integration, it is essential to examine contacts between immigrants and members of the receiving society, often referred to as “social integration” (Martinovic, Tubergen & Maas, 2011, p. 460). However, from our research, it seems that their social life is, in general, not as fulfilling as their professional life.

Being proficient in the host country's language does give an individual some convenience in his/her life, such as calling customer service without bothering others, but when they want to go further to a socially comfortable level other than exchanging pleasantries, it becomes a whole new different game, because everyday life practice presupposes knowledge about norms, values and traditions that are important parts of culture of this society.

Sam and Lisa have been in Canada for more than two decades, and they find cultural differences are still there. "What we are interested in is not what they are interested in. We Chinese can discuss everything, including politics, religion, and personal life, but these are taboos to Canadians. There isn't much left to talk about." What they can exchange, say sports and weather, to Sam, is very superficial and does not increase mutual understanding and rapport. Also, as there is no shared experience, following in the conversation sometimes seems hard, especially on public occasions. They feel very comfortable with their Chinese friends. "You can talk loud, argue, lay back and relax." Cultural barrier is still a roadblock to engaging in "superficial" (original in English) talk that is supposed to promote friendliness and establish rapport with locals.

"Making friends with locals is considered as an important criterion of successful acculturation" (Ward, 2001). Selina prefers to hang out with Chinese after work, "because we eat the same food. And when we get together it is all about eating. Chinese food agrees with our stomach." Alexandria socializes with local people, but the topic is still about the workplace. "I've a small circle of friends at work. We invite each other over for dinner, and took turns to cook for a sick colleague and gave her a baby shower." She claimed that she had a kind of "profession-related social life": "I can share some workplace-related gossip with them because we trust each other. But the socializing in this circle, to me, is still different from socializing in the Chinese community." She feels that she has limited topic choices. Once the topic is not related to work and is off to something that is part of their life or culture, "I can only make limited contribution. ... I don't know how to make the breakthrough yet." When it comes to *in-depth* communication with Canadians, Veronica finds that "because of the difference in thinking and culture, in most cases I just observe and listen. I always think there is a barrier, and I'm afraid of hurting other people. I always hold something back."

Getting involved in family matters may be one of the reasons that some immigrants preclude themselves from the host culture. Karlee has been here for about 10 years, and she still views local events as irrelevant. "It is not the focus of my life. I'm very family-oriented. I have no social life, and I know little about the outside world." Alexandria who is struggling with her two kids really finds that she has limited time and energy. "I'm too busy to socialize. I know socializing with them would increase understanding. But I just don't have the desire." Alexandria's successful professional life is complete with a busy family life, and she does not think she misses anything. "We can do without it."

Culture is the obstacle. Martha's analogy about the host culture as a bubble reveals her frustration. "I'm on the outside of the bubble. It seems transparent. I can see everything inside, what's going on, and what they are talking about. But I'm always standing outside. A thin sheet prevents me from going inside." She tried hard to communicate with local people, hanging out with them. But after staying in Canada for a while, making progress in language and being able to function quite well in life, the need to be part of the larger society is not as strong as it was.

“Why bother? To use a Chinese saying: I don’t want to break the window paper. Just let it be. We just live together peacefully.” From feeling excluded to choosing to live a parallel life to the locals, Martha’s proficient language does not play a significant role.

Bill stayed with a Canadian family for a couple of years. He took part in their activities, and made some friends. “Even so, you do not necessarily have a deep understanding ... It takes a long time and process.” Maybe Wanda’s remarks can best elaborate why there exists such helplessness or awkwardness in social life. “If you do not grow up here, you don’t know a lot of things people here are talking about. It is just like climbing a ladder, some steps are missing. I may be able to have those missing steps replaced if I have children in the future and I can grow up with them.”

The discussion in the above shows that knowing the language of the host society does not necessarily enlarge networks and increase the likelihood of successful social integration as Boyd and Cao (2009) expected. To be able to behave in accordance with the expectations of the new cultural environment, an adequately proficient language is not enough, and many immigrants still need to take time to accumulate their experience by engaging in different interactions that occur in various social settings of the host culture, because the lack of “meaningful relationships” could be a factor that hinders that process, and the link between integration and proficiency is still very weak no matter how hard one wants to make friends from the host culture (Ortactepe, 2013, p. 227). Those “missing steps” are essential for full integration and that is what the government programs and educators could recognize. They are expected to design policies and programs to remedy the situation and to help connect the “missing steps”. To language-proficient immigrants, these additional help would facilitate their integration.

6.4. Perceived Discrimination in Their Social Life

These immigrants’ social life is somewhat evaded purposefully due to a cultural unfamiliarity, unwanted because of the achievement in a successful professional life, and denied with an excuse from a busy family life. In comparison with the data from their life in the workplace, the researchers got fewer recounts about their discrimination in their social life. However, the discrimination in social life that these immigrants felt is more real. Please note the word used here is “felt”. One reason that they admitted is that they never had a chance to compare their notes with local people, and another reason is that no one in Canada will overtly admit that they discriminate against anyone, so they were not sure if the discrimination was immigrant-specific or was also applied to native Canadians. But they did feel very uncomfortable for being treated differently.

Patricia has been living in Canada for many years, and she is so well-integrated that she has never realized that there remain some differential treatments. She noticed such difference when she had a ride with her Canadian and non-Canadian friends on different occasions. When stopped by a police, her Caucasian Canadian friend got a very friendly “warning” of “driving safely” from the police, but her non-Canadian friend not only got a speeding ticket but also a scolding. Wanda thought she was not fairly treated at the auto repair shop. “I don’t know whether it is because I’m a foreigner or I’m a woman, or because I know nothing about cars”.

Zoe felt that her landlord was very mean to them, and Jane also complained that her landlord kept her damage deposit for months after she had moved out. Proficient English does not seem to help that much. They didn't know whether their cultural ignorance made them an easy target so that they were taken advantage of. Several participants shared the same details that they were more likely to be checked at the airport if they came back from the States.

Workplace is a sheltered place to some extent, but society is wide open, where one is likely to encounter different people whose behavior pattern is not so predictable or regulated. Though they argued and fought, and sometimes won, they seemed not so confident in their proficient language. Their proficient language didn't seem to reduce or stop the different treatment they received.

Again, understanding discrimination is a far more delicate matter in social life, and dealing with the issue is more challenging.

7. Findings and Discussion

After analyzing the data collected and exploring achievements these immigrants made and their response to problems and challenges in their integration, we had some interesting findings about integration. Some supported the theories we discussed in the literature review, some could shed a new light on our understanding of the issue; some are unique to only one of the two groups, some are common across both groups, and can even be true to other immigrant groups as well.

7.1. Partial Function and Specialization Integration May be the Best Acculturative Strategy

It is found in our research that our participants' previous command of language contributes a lot to easing the transition to the new environment and settlement. They are seldom deskilled. They can get jobs that match their skills, and seek professional growth in the workplace. Though sometimes they may encounter discrimination as other less proficient immigrants would, they are quite happy to see that in most cases, they are supported and helped along. No matter whether their workplace is with a diverse cultural backgrounds or a Canadian-dominant background, they could bring out their full potentials and are actively involved. They have proven themselves as contributing members of the society.

While a proficient language indeed helped these immigrants function really well in their workplace, their cultural background undermined the role that language plays in their social life. Their good English does not provide them with an easy access in the host culture's social life. The lack of familiarity with cultural codes in Canada sometimes made it hard for them to strike up a "superficial" talk that actually enhances friendship and rapport, and they have to keep to their Chinese community for a comfortable social life, and sometimes avoid different interactions that occur in various social settings to be culturally proficient. To cite Chianello (2009), they do live "parallel lives"—professionally integrated, but socially divided though these immigrants are not living in so-called enclaves.

The separation in home/personal/social life and integration in their professional life occur partly because of the availability of a home cultural community, from which they can get

sufficient emotional and social support, partly because their rewarding profession can make the compensation. Though parallel, their two lives still complement each other.

While Integration has been proved to be the best acculturative strategy, partial function and specialization integration accurately delineates the circumstances of most of our participants, and this combination “is probably the most realistic option for millions of immigrants, sojourners, and other people participating in intercultural exchanges” to adopt (Boski, 2008, p. 148). This course has been made possible due to the fact that “economic integration” has been the reality for many of these immigrants.

7.2. Factors Other than Proficient Language Are Identified in Easing Their Integration

It is also interesting to find that while these immigrants are blessed with linguistic proficiency and enjoying its advantages, they deny to some extent the role proficiency plays in their success in life. To them, proficient English is only a secondary factor.

Participants in both groups attribute their success to some universal qualities of being a good person, such as sincerity, integrity, learning ability, positive attitude and hard work rather than one’s language or perfect accent. They believe that in any country, in any culture, the common values defining a good person are somewhat universal. One will be valued for his/her integrity. One’s character, ability and attitude are very important.

Another factor is one’s tolerance and open attitude to Canadian culture, and one is always ready to step out of the comfort zone and learn. Dolly said, “On the one hand, you respect host culture, on the other hand, you should do your job well. You will not feel so culturally challenged. People here value your character, ability and attitude.” Brian added that you’ve got to make conscious effort to get to know the host culture. “It is impossible to take in all the cultural knowledge through a mere inhalation of its air”.

Patrician emphasized being an interesting person and having an open mind. She said, “If you don’t associate with people here, they will respect your choice. ...If you get hooked up with them, you will come into contact with them slowly and gradually.”

Veronica identified it as attitude issue. A correct attitude (*xintai*) is very necessary. As some immigrants came to Canada giving up their established careers and social status at home, they inevitably underwent some losses, professionally, economically, and socially. To fit in this society better, they have to let go some of their past achievements, and accept what Canada has to offer to them.

7.3. China as an Emerging Economic Power Plays a Noticeable Role in These Immigrants’ Integration

Unlike the old immigrants, the new immigrants came to Canada when China was rising as an economic power and was catching up with the world, and when Chinese people’s life was tangibly improving. They came with both linguistic and financial assets. With a really established career left behind at home, some immigrants are always agonizing over giving up all they have achieved in China for a completely new life in Canada. Some young new immigrants found life in Canada offered less than what they had expected, especially in terms

of career opportunity and material success.

Ray commented, "We have to play by rules here. There is no flexibility. Not like in China, there are many uncertainties. Uncertainty means opportunities." Max, though staying in Canada for about 10 years and being an immigrant for 5 years, has always been thinking of going back to China with the expertise gained in Canada. "The best I can make myself here is a university professor. But most probably, I will end up as an engineer. There will be no highlights in my life. There are more opportunities in China. I will have more potentials, be a professor or other professional." China has presented itself as a pulling force and going back to China for more career opportunities is a recurrent theme for some new immigrants in the first group.

The old immigrants came to Canada when the gap of material prosperity between the two countries was still huge, and settling in Canada meant a great leap in terms of material comfort. When asked to evaluate their integration in their near country, almost all the interviewees in this old group claim that they are quite satisfied with what they have got and have "no regrets at all".

They identify themselves more with Canada, and their way of thinking and behaviour patterns are more Canadianized. They are now professionally established, economically stable and socially flexible. Their social life follows the selective integration pattern: they still get involved in the activities in the Chinese community, but they can flexibly choose to associate with their ethnic community or engage in the wider society at preferred levels. To these older immigrants, the length of stay, the success of career and the timing of coming to Canada all played roles in their integration.

However, the rising of China as a world power is also an attracting force to them. Some of them are thinking of seeking opportunities in China. Some have already had their projects conducted in China and have maintained close ties in both host and home countries by traveling back and forth, and their advice is sought and valued by two sides. To these old immigrants in the second group, the relation to China is an add-on to their Canadian identity.

Whichever group these immigrants belong to, China as an emerging economic power means they get involved in the social activities of the host society while maintaining their ties in China even when they are well-settled in Canada.

8. Conclusion

This study on language proficient immigrants helps us to understand the myth that language is a determining factor for a successful integration. The fact is that a proficient language alone is far from sufficient for full integration. It still takes time for these English-proficient immigrants to be able to behave in accordance with the expectations of the new cultural environment, and finally to be full participants of Canada. The success and well-being of an immigrant depend on factors other than language, such as open-mindedness, desire to integrate, attitude, sincerity, and ability, etc.

Canada is a multi-cultural society which tolerates and respects differences in people. The rising of China as a power is a pulling force to new immigrants, an add-on to established old immigrants. Although we study China as a case, it indicates that as immigrants' home country's political and economic situation changes or evolves, it has direct bearing on the attitude toward integration or the degree of integration, even the identity of the immigrant from that country.

As the goals and programs that determine who shall be legally admitted for purposes of permanent residence have recently undergone some changes, more and more future immigrants do not need as much language training as their predecessors. This requires a shift of focus in policy-making: from language training to overall training on full integration or mutual understanding. It's high time to include official language proficient immigrants in policy consideration so that they can also benefit from policies targeted at immigrants. More effort or resources could be put into identity building, and into various related aspects other than language.

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Appendix

Semi-structured Interview questions

In order to probe into the social cultural adjustments our participants made, questions about different domains of acculturation are asked during the semi-structured interview. The following are just some sample questions.

Personal information

The questions in this part are intended to find out their background information, the reason to Canada, work and study environment, and living state.

- Why did you choose to come/immigrate to Canada?
- What did you do at home and what are you doing now in Canada?
- Where do you stay, apartment, condo or house?

Language

The questions in this part are to explore the impact of their proficient English learned at home or improved in Canada on their professional life and social life.

- What are the English test/tests you took before you came to Canada?
- Have you ever experienced some occasions that your proficient English helped or did not help so much, for example, in your professional life or social life?
- According to Statistics Canada (2005), knowledge of the two official languages was proved an asset in finding paid employment. What benefits did your language asset bring about, in your daily life, or professional life?

Social relationship

The questions in this part are intended to focus on their social life, including contact with local people—method, frequency, and attachment.

- How do you acquire and maintain local contacts?
- How often do you attend Chinese/Canadian gatherings, parties and other informal social activities? Do you feel you belong or feel excluded?
- Do you think you are “Chinese Canadian” or “Canadian Chinese”?

Media preference

The questions in this part are intended to find out their media preference, their tie with home country and their willingness to participate in the host country.

- Do you often watch Canadian/English movies or TV programs? Or do you prefer to watch Chinese movies or TV programs on the Internet?
- Do you often browse Canadian websites to keep updated or do you visit Chinese website more to keep what is happening in China?

Difficulties encountered and achievements made

- What are the problems and difficulties you encounter in workplace? And how did you solve or overcome them?

- What are the problems and difficulties you encounter in your social life? And how did you solve or overcome them?

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