Chapter 16
Addressing the Needs of Adult English Language Learners and Motivational Skills

Samira R. Galvao
National University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter covers the following topics: the differences between adult English language learners and the adult native English speakers, diversity, language diversity, diversity within higher-ed, cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural diversity, strengths, challenges, and motivation. The purpose of this chapter is to address the needs of adult English language learners in higher education and the different types of motivational skills to empower these scholars to stay dedicated to keep moving forward in their educational journey regardless of their needs. Additionally, the author addresses the importance of culture and the need for cultural competence in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The population of adult English language learners (ELLs) in the United States is rising, and similarly, the number of adult ELLs who are enrolled in Adult Secondary Education (ASE) is expanding due to several factors (Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2019). According to Bergey (2018), the number of adult ELLs in higher education has been steadily growing due to increases in the immigration system, along with the influx of more international scholars who are enrolling in the United States' educational facilities to complete their education. Banks (2019) states adult ELLs are the fastest-growing population in educational facilities across the United States. As stated by (Wright, 2022) it has been a struggle to support the academic success of ELLs attending schools in the United States. According to Sheng et al. (2016), educational facilities servicing a higher number of adult ELLs must have the appropriate support and improved methods in place to maintain and enhance techniques in place to assist their scholars' conversion and achievement of English skills.

With the increase of ELLs in the United States, educators need to be provided with vital tools to better support adult English learners in their classrooms. According to the U.S. Census, as of 2014, there were 64.1 million native English speakers who had completed graduate school, and 10.5 million were immigrants. As noted by Olsen-Medina and Batalova (2020), as of 2018, ages 25 and older represent only 17% of university-educated immigrants. Of all the bachelor's degrees obtained by scholars in the United States, thirty-two percent of these degrees are earned by adult ELL (12.6 million people) who continued to pursue a graduate degree or higher, compared to the thirty-three percent rate for native English adult speakers.

Along with the college education share for foreign-born is rising among the recently arrived, with forty-seven percent of those arriving in the past five years having a college degree. Bergey et al. (2018), states there are 1.1 million adult ELL scholars enrolled in higher education facilities in the United States. Although not all adult immigrant scholars are considered to be ELLs, this is a clear diverse shift in higher education. According to García (2021), ELL scholars in the United States will continue to be linguistically and culturally diverse for many years to come.

In this chapter, I will address the needs of adult ELLs in higher education and the different types of motivational skills to empower these scholars to stay dedicated to keep moving forward in their educational journey regardless of their needs. Additionally, I will address the importance of culture, and the need for cultural responsiveness and cultural competence in higher education.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Cultural Awareness. Acknowledgment of the nuances of your own and other cultures. This implies the procedure by which people and organizations react politely and efficiently to people of all ethnicities, foreign languages, groups, cultural groups, ethnic backgrounds, and additional diversity aspects in an approach that acknowledges, asserts, and respects the value of people, relatives, and communities and defends and conserves the self-respect of each (Robinson-Wood, 2016).

Cultural Competence. The ability to effectively interact with people from cultures different from one's own, especially through knowledge and appreciation of cultural differences. Precisely, it implies a set of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that permit a professional to be efficient in a range of cross-cultural circumstances (Cultural Competence in Education, 2016).

Cultural Diversity. Distinctions in race, culture, ethnic group, financial status, physical capability, foreign language, faith, ethics, conduct patterns, or traditions among numerous alliances within a group of people, association, or country (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020).

Cultural Responsiveness. Requires the ability to recognize potential biases, comprehension of cultural differences, and looking beyond these obstacles to work effectively with students, families, and communities with different cultural contexts (Muñiz, 2019).

Diversity. Adult English language learners (ELLs) come to graduate school with a broad range of experience in understanding, foreign language, and literacy skills. The educational knowledge of the scholars is affected by numerous influences such as the amount of time spent in school, the value of instruction, transiency, family circumstances, and previous emotional encounters from graduate school (Slavin et al., 2017).

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