

# **MIGRATION OF STUDENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE: HOW THIS COURSE CAN HELP STUDENTS TO OVERCOME INTERCULTURAL DIFERENCES**

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to investigate the behavior of students from some states in Brazil who come to the Federal Technological University of Paraná - Câmpus Apucarana - Brazil to take their undergraduate courses. The interest in the theme came from the observations reported by the students about their difficulties in situations of change. We have already analyzed some cases of student behavior when they crossed their borders to the United States of America, Canada and Europe. We also examined some cultural and linguistic aspects that influenced his stay, as well as his return to a certain university in the interior of Paraná. Many studies about cultural shocks in migrations of short or long periods have been conducted, however we do not have many reports referring to Brazilian speakers who took English for Specific Purposes subjects with the purpose of traveling abroad as researchers or to achieve an increase in their academic careers. The preliminary results of the present investigation reveal that public policies for the development of Brazilian education must invest more resources in order to promote quality. This statement is based on the lack of exchange programs such as Sciences without Borders, which encouraged students and teachers to invest in the search for knowledge of foreign languages and in the application of scholarships at foreign universities.

**Keywords:** Migration of students. English for Specific Purpose. Internationalization.

## **A IMIGRAÇÃO DE ESTUDANTES E A IMPORTÂNCIA DE ESTUDAR INGLÊS PARA FINS ESPECÍFICOS: COMO ESSE CURSO PODE AUXILIAR ESTUDANTES A SUPERAR DIFERENÇAS INTERCULTURAIS.**

**RESUMO:** O propósito deste trabalho é investigar o comportamento de estudantes de alguns estados do Brasil que vêm para a Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná- Câmpus

Apucarana – Brasil para fazerem seus cursos de graduação. O interesse pelo tema veio a partir das observações relatadas pelos estudantes acerca de suas dificuldades em situações de mudança. Já analisamos alguns casos do comportamento de estudantes quando atravessaram suas fronteiras para os Estados Unidos da América, para o Canadá e para a Europa. Também examinamos alguns aspectos culturais e linguísticos que influenciou sua estada, bem como seu retorno a determinada universidade do interior do Paraná. Muitos estudos acerca de choques culturais nas migrações de curtos ou longos períodos foram conduzidos, porém não temos muitos relatos referentes a falantes brasileiros que fizeram disciplina de Inglês para Fins Específicos com o propósito de viajar para o exterior como pesquisadores ou para conseguir uma elevação em suas carreiras acadêmicas. Os resultados preliminares da presente investigação revelam que as políticas públicas para o desenvolvimento da educação brasileira devem investir mais recursos com vias à promoção da qualidade. Tal afirmação é baseada na falta de programas de Intercâmbio como o *Ciências sem Fronteiras* que estimulava estudantes e professores a investirem na busca por conhecimento de línguas estrangeiras e na aplicação de bolsas de estudos em universidades estrangeiras.

**Palavras-chave:** Migração de estudantes. Inglês para Fins Específicos. Internacionalização.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Migration leads to far-reaching improvement to society as it impacts positively many fields as in researches, intercultural partnerships, scientific cooperation, and friendly Exchange programs. Migrancy is one of the outcomes of globalization. Here, migration is referred to as people who move to other countries to study or to other universities within the home country. We believe that culture shock and its consequences like anxiety, stress, and depression must be discussed in the academic realm. But, this study had been absent from our research topics before the official Exchange programs and others that attracted students to look for new experiences in different fields.

Here, we are going to discuss interculturalism as registered by Deresky (2002) who affirms there are synonymous with cross-culturalism: interculturalism, intercultural relations, cultural interactivity, transculturation, cosmopolitanism, and globalism.

The following study also illustrates how the *U-Curve model* by Oberg works in understanding students' behavior. According to their narratives, in their mobility to other

countries or in the Campuses of the universities around Brazil we note some traits of the theory mentioned above.

The problem-formulation questions the obstacles that the migrants face to achieve their dreams when they participate in an Intercultural Program. These questions also reflect on the troubles found in their undergraduate courses in the universities of their home country.

The methods of the study show the traits of the *U-Curve model* and the questions made in the structured interviews.

There is a reflection on the studies of the English language and the ESP (English for Specific Purpose) as an instrument to help students to master the target-language skills to be successful and accomplish their goals.

With the results obtained, it is surely decisive to have programs sponsored by public policies that stimulate internationalization for reciprocal work.

In the final considerations, we will see that the perception of the cultural components in the histories of the migrants and the countries, is basal to understand the ideas shaped by individuals and by groups to move peaceful cooperation.

## 2 PROBLEM-FORMULATION

Very often students report they face hardships on intercultural communication when traveling abroad either at the university, they go to take a course or to participate in research or homestays. They also state they have trouble when they migrate to the Campuses of UTFPR. Here we are going to consider the matters linked to our students who go abroad or come to a university of technology in the countryside of Paraná, Brasil.

One of the objectives of the discipline ESP is also to help students to adapt to new situations on Câmpus Apucarana or in a university abroad. The instructor of English at UTFPR in Apucarana, Paraná, Brazil works to promote the best linguist environment possible for the students to be successful in proficiency in English as a second language, as well as in productive social interactions. Thus, it argues that some key questions should be asked to reflect on our problem-formulation.

1. What situations can be considered a real hindrance to the development of the studies or research at the foreign university or UTFPR in Apucarana, Paraná State, Brazil?
2. How much does the language proficiency help for better and more friendly communication among foreign students/faculty?
3. Can the *U-Curve model* created by Kim (2001) and Oberg's *theory* (1960) with the four-stage sequence in cultural adjustment be effectively observed in the students' behavior abroad or in Brazil?

### 3 METHODS OF STUDY

Methodologically, we initiated the studies with the analysis of the material that investigates the cross-cultural challenges, the intercultural differences the students have faced on their trips abroad to take disciplines in a foreign University or to participate in a research group of their interest.

The *U-curve model* (OBERG, 2006) describes the way many people feel while trying to adapt to a new situation. What was observed in several immigrants applies to most of the students who travel abroad as a short-term or long-term immigrant and to the students who come from other parts of Brazil to study at UTFPR- AP, Paraná - Brazil.

We decided to use Oberg's theory (2006) who registered his notes about missionaries' behaviors. This model offers theoretical explanations of his findings in statistical tests in different groups investigated.

This model is called *U-curve* because the person starts at a high level of feelings with enthusiasm. Later on, depending on the stress, disappointment, and anxiety, he/she feels at the bottom of a curve, and after a certain period of maturity and assimilation of the surroundings, the person experiences some boost in his/her emotional level. This can be interpreted as a take-off.

Oberg postulates there is a four-stage sequence in cultural adjustment. The steps are A) Honeymoon phase; B) Culture shock; C) Recovery/Adjustment; D) Adaptation or Assimilation

A) Honeymoon phase:

- The person feels: excited, happy, on the top of the curve;
- Tries to be acquainted with his/her surroundings;
- The first contacts are enjoyable;
- The social meetings are friendly and pleasant;
- The hosts seem to be hospitable.

B) Culture shock:

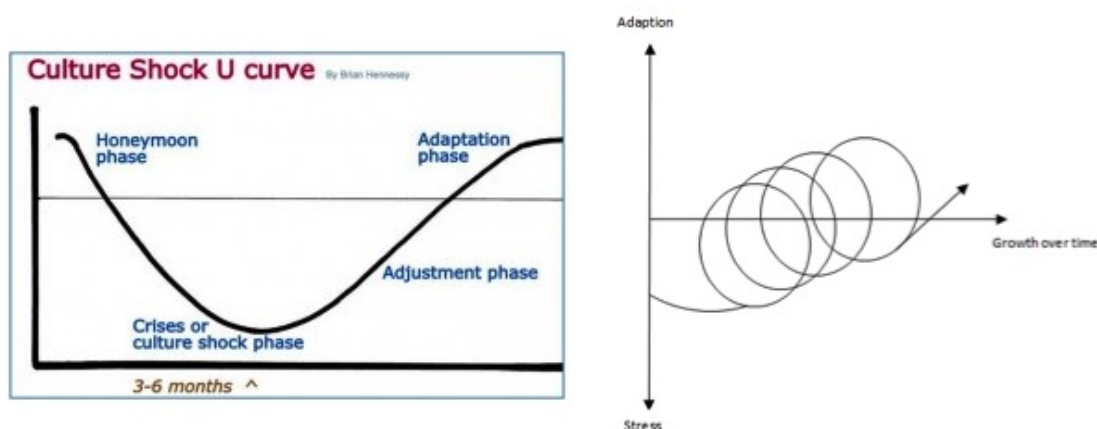
- The person: misses a warmer emotional environment;
- There are complaints about the challenges that certainly come;
- The person misses family and friends from the home country;
- The person feels isolated and depressed;
- Thinks that should have learned more aspects of the English language and its culture.

C) Recovery/Adjustment:

- The person: notices he/she needs to accept changes;
- It's time to remember that new experiences require patience to face challenges;
- The person becomes more adaptable.

D) Adaptation/Assimilation:

- Finally, the person becomes tolerant of the hardships that naturally happen in new situations;
- The person makes friends;
- The language skills are more developed and the person can understand the native speakers and be understood;
- Feels it's a privilege to be in the midst of the home culture and the host culture.



**Figure 1 - This figure depicts the phases of th *U-curve* Model**

Source: <https://eindhovennews.com/features/2017/07/cultural-shock-cross-cultural-adaptation/>

Afterwards, we chose 44 students who took ESL (English for Specific Purpose) discipline at UTFPR, in Apucarana in the last 4 years<sup>1</sup>. 43 students were Brazilians, 1 was from an African country. They agreed to participate in the survey as soon as they returned from the host universities. The others who came from other regions of Brazil, accepted to talk about their reaction towards the new lifestyle they had just started in Apucarana.

We elected the answers of some students to bring out here because this paper does not aim at presenting the whole research, especially because it has not been finished yet. We established not to identify the interviewers because they informed us that they would feel more comfortable to answer the questions if they were anonymous.

#### 4 CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The students who come to the UTFPR-AP originate from all over Brazil. Some of them come from other countries. Needless to say they have faced cultural shocks since the first days in the new city.

<sup>1</sup> This program is part of the Research Project *INTERCULTURAL CHANGES AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS: an analysis based on the theoretical assumptions of the U AND W CURVE model*. It investigates the behavior of people who experience intercultural changes, through interviews, based on the theories of Kim (2003), Bennett (2008), Hall (1977), and others of the same scope, reinforcing the need to respect diversity.

In the writings of Bacaltchuk (2011, p.12) introducing Vergara's work (2007), we find the explanations *that the expatriate is someone who lives and works abroad, a person who is granted the possibility of living another life, thus breaking emotional bonds and being part of an experience full of new customs and uncertainties.*

The university is, at first, a space of recognition, adaptation (if possible), disappointment, independence, or even victory for some who dreamed of being far from hometown or taking a course at a Federal institution.

But, many of them face hardships due to the lack of family and friends warmth, food, and other features of their culture. These differences in culture provoke difficulty in social interactions. Then, communication becomes harder. *Intercultural communication is widely regarded as being much more challenging than the normal communication because it occurs between two or more people with extensively different world views* (SAMOVAR, PORTER, & McDANIEL, 2009, p.98).

The cultural differences in the realm of the university sometimes incite to unfriendliness among the students. There was a time some students from the Northeast of Brazil complained they had been illtreated by students who come from the Southeast or South of the country.

They thought just language was the point. The accent of the Northeast of Brazil is different from the others. Indeed, all five regions of Brazil have diverse accents. We talked to the students saying that language is part of a culture. Nevertheless, we noticed it was also a social and economic prejudice against the groups mentioned above because the North and Northeast of Brazil is unintelligently seen by the people from the south and southeast as a cradle of poverty and ignorance. As Rothenberg (1988, p. 368), defends:

Language not only develops in conjunction with a society's historical, economic and political Evolution; it also reflects that society's attitudes and thinking. Language not only *expresses* ideas and concepts but actually *shapes* thought.

Therefore, we directed the teaching of ESP showing the students that discriminate against the others is evidence that the cultural contexts must be analyzed more widely. It is

critical to stop framing a cultural spot as if it were an only region. This way, living interculturally demands open viewpoints.

According to the place someone lives and interacts with his/her community he/she will have a kind of perception of the context. So, the more people live new experiences, the more they broaden the way of thinking and interacting.

This shift helps us understand communication among people wherever we go. The perception of the cultural components in the histories of the students we receive at UTFPR-AP is fundamental to grasp the ideas shaped by individuals and by wider groups such as varied categories of people.

As asserted by Deardoff (2009, p.142), *very often, the prospect of adapting to other cultures raises the question of whether you should adapt, how much to adapt, or, perhaps most importantly, whether we will have to give up ourselves if we adapt to that other person.*

So, Understanding, Listening, Speaking, Writing, or Reading a second language go beyond dominating the skills needed to nurture affable assimilation.

It's indispensable to be aware to behave friendly towards the individuals, the areas and the moments to use either formal or informal language, to adjudge the message within words. Summarizing, we have to build a respectful communication to negotiate reciprocal actions for a culture of peace.

## 5 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE

### 5. 1 INSTRUMENTAL ENGLISH AS A TOOL FOR PROFICIENCY

The use of the language for communication is an ancient tool used by conquerors, travellers, researchers, invaders and others even before any signs of diasporas in the world. Harari (2014, p.70) registered that

Following the Cognitive Revolution, Sapiens acquired the technology, the organisation skills, and perhaps even the vision necessary to break out of Afro-Asia and settle the Outer World. Their first achievement was the colonisation of Australia some 45,000 years ago.



As an instrument to understand the English language and travel to English speaking countries to study or work, the main linguistic skill used for a specific purpose was Reading. Doctor Celani from the Catolic Pontifical University of São Paulo organized the first National Project for the teaching of English for Specific Purposes in 1970. At that time, the course was called Instrumental English (RAMOS, 2005, p. 151).

Celani's Project was so innovative that it changed the Entrance Examinations Functioning of many universities throughout Brazil. After her proposal, the Exams started to offer Reading comprehension of adapted passages. Nowadays, there are Reading comprehension passages of several textual genres.

Another leverage of the English for Specific Purposes was to identify the needs of the students. Therefore, their difficulty was detected to facilitate their learning. The material the professors used was selected according to the region the students came from.

As stated by Celani (2009), her Project was sponsored by the British Council and FAPESP (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo). Besides raising funds to purchase specially designed books, both organizations invited researches and scholars to speak at Seminars, Congresses, and to foment scientific projects of ESP.

In 2011 the Brazilian government led by President Dilma Rousseff created and sponsored the program *Science without Borders*. The program offered a scholarship for Brazilian students who took courses at Federal Universities in Brazil. They would go to countries whose universities accepted our students to take disciplines of the university and participate in the professors' research groups. The students would stay abroad for an academic semester or year.

One of the requirements to get the scholarship was to pass the TOEFL EXAM (Test Of English as a Foreign Language). Thus, the candidates were encouraged to study English to have the grade necessary to be accepted by the program.

With the end of the program *Science without Borders* the students now have fewer options to obtain international experiences. The ones who have financial conditions to afford to pay for the expenses, go abroad through the *International Academic Mobility*.

The students do not pay for the fees at the University chosen but must pay for the flight tickets, homestay, meals, school materials, transportation in the country, and other costs.

After they arrived in Brazil, the students who took part in any programs in foreign universities were compelled to present a seminar telling his/her experience and share knowledge with the academic community.

This procedure of asking students to share the international experience is a form of showing to themselves and their fellow students that differences will always be found anywhere. What they must do is to recognize that the more they visit other places, the more they will find diversity. This is part of a living experience. It's a cultural adaptation, the long-term process of adjusting to, and finally feeling comfortable in a new environment (KIM, 2001).

Some of the objectives of the ESP at UTFPR-AP are to incentivize students to think dialectically, to learn from one another, and to enrich relationships.

The course of ESP at UTFPR-AP offers 44 vacancies each academic semester. There are classes once a week in a room specially used for English language classes.

The syllabus of ESP includes the study of verb overview, nouns, adjectives, cognates and false cognates, Reading and Writing techniques, Listening comprehension, and Talking time for the practice of speaking English. The students must read academic papers to write his/her short abstract. ESP is also a requirement to be approved in the Engineering under graduation courses.

Along the ESP course, we reflect and guide the students to interact friendly with one another in Brazil or abroad. Subsequently, we organize the literature that is used for the analysis, draw up a questionnaire to be answered individually by the students who had accepted to participate in the following structured interview.

*1) What were the deepest disappointments in your host university?*

*- We had expected a warmer reception.*

*- We thought it would be easier to make friends with classmates and faculty.*

*- We took long to understand the language in its totality and took longer to be understood.*

2) *What were the hardest cultural shocks?*

- *At first, we were shocked at the colder manner the members of the host family had about parents and children's relationship. The US American children are encouraged to be independent and to leave home. In Brazil, parents protect their children and induce them to stay home as long as they can.*

- *Another shock was concerning food. The US American families that hosted Brazilian students did not cook every night as it is in Brazil. Abroad food is not as natural as in Brazilian culture.*

- *A particular city where some of the students went to, had a curfew that rang at 9 pm. This time is considered early for us Brazilian young people. In Brazil, young people go home around 3 or 4 am.*

- *Dinner time is also early for Brazilians, around 5:30 to 6:00 pm. In Brazil, the full-time courses go from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Thus, most families have dinner around 8 or 9 pm.*

3) *What was the most ruthless personal, social, or academic issue?*

- *We had not perceived the personal bubbles people live in. The physical distance is much more respected than in Brazil.*

- *Hugging and kissing in the social context is not as common as in Brazil, even among family members.*

- *We observed the professors' incentive students solve their school problems by themselves. Of course the faculty assists the students, but it does not worry about them as much as the faculty does in Brazil.*

4) *What did the host university do to support you in face of troubles that commonly happen in migrations or immigrations?*

*- The faculty and the Psychopedagogical support team were very friendly, polite and well prepared to help. Yet they were not as kind as the support groups in Brazil.*

*5) In reference of studying at UTFPR-AP, Paraná State, Brazil, what were your first privations?*

*- Although there was help from the Psychopedagogical support team and of the veterans of the university to find homestay and dorms, it was hard to live by ourselves, to go shopping, wash, clean, cook and do housework we had never done before.*

A young guy said he had always been the best student of his whole high school in his hometown, but at UTFPR-AP his grades were so low that he almost gave up because he lost the rank of best student.

*6) What were the cultural shocks you had when you arrived at a different city?*

*-When we came from a bigger city, we thought Apucarana was too small. Night life was very limited. There were fewer options to purchase. Restaurants and stores were simpler.*

When the students came from a smaller town, they said Apucarana was bigger, with more options, and food and clothing were more expensive.

*7) What would you say to other students who would go abroad or come to UTFPR-AP?*

*- Undoubtedly, I would encourage them to go abroad, to live such an exciting experience. It is an upgrade in academic and personal life. If someone is afraid, I would say it is impossible to get stuck in academic and personal life. Once you stop you go back. Hence, we must go ahead.*

*8) What life or academic experience (s) would you share with your fellow students?*

*- After facing the hardships, we would live our experiences again, but now more wisely. We would not live in our parents' homes again.*

*-We would study the English language with more dedication because if we had the opportunity to go abroad to study at a foreign university we surely would.*

In the end, a female student registered she walked the pathways of anger to self-pity to awareness of oppression that she felt.

All the students affirmed they were thrilled when they learned they had been approved to come to Apucarana to take the Engineering course they had chosen. It was the top of the *U-Curve*. After some time, with the cultural shocks they started going down the curve. Later on, when they missed the main aspects of their culture like family, friends, *cuisine*, comfort, etc., they registered they found themselves on the bottom of the curve.

Next, the period of assimilation and understanding of the facets of the new culture, they realized they should feel better as if climbing the curve. Eventually, they even would stay longer in the host country or university, if they were allowed to. Around 95% of the students overcame the impact of cultural transitions.

## 5 RESULTS

Although some of the students who took part in this study had a propensity to depression or low self-esteem consequences, they affirmed that the results obtained were more positive than negative.

Most of them accrued knowledge, grew up in commitment to the studies and their circumstances, and gave a new sense for friendship.

Their experience also made them more skilled English speakers. Such growth contributed to their career development that value Education of high quality. We can certify that it drives to discoveries and deepen partnerships with universities and enterprises. It is also a trigger for Internationalization of the Brazilian universities.

In 2016, the program Sciences without Borders was canceled. Other programs that offered scholarships for Brazilian students were extinguished. Therefore, one can affirm that despite the proof that Exchange Programs are drivers of better improvement of knowledge, our current government policies have decreased to nearly zero.

## CONCLUSION

With the results attained we can conclude that initiatives for more investment in Exchange Programs in many levels of Education are compelling. Migration to study is a transfer of know-how. These programs grant new perspectives for inventions and more cultural clusters expansion like Internationalization. It is also a powerful apparatus for producing research of the highest quality and, above all, it enhances an ethically oriented teaching-learning.

However, with the end of scholarships for low-income students the directions of Education in Brazil are going to encounter a decline. Such a situation pushes Education to a vulnerable condition that increases social inequality.

We also conclude Oberg's theory needs more research and applying, nonetheless, it worked well for our investigation.

Finally, respectful intercultural communication at schools is a crucial role to build a culture of friendship. As Menezes (2011, p. 325) affirms:

*Interculturality presents itself as an ethical requirement to recognize the other, where dialogue becomes an exercise of justice.*

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