

Language Alienation of Sri Lankan Students Studying Overseas: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Every year, a considerable number of Sri Lankan students migrate overseas to further their studies. In comparison to previous years, the total number of students emigrating has increased significantly. Especially, in such countries, many migrant students are able to find new opportunities for their career development other than furthering their education. This qualitative research aims to examine the language alienation of Sri Lankan students studying overseas and how it has hindered the achievement of their academic outcomes. Ten migrant students studying in Canada and Australia for more than six months were selected as participants in the study. Semi-structured interview was administered to gather data and Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to arrange, analyze and interpret the data. The findings of the study revealed that 90% of the participants experienced language alienation upon arrival in these countries. They could not complete many of their daily tasks, such as making friends, understanding lectures, and participating in classroom events, due to the language barrier. Participants reported that the inadequate opportunity for enhancing their English communication skills in ESL classrooms in Sri Lanka is the key reason for this situation. As they claim, Sri Lankan primary and secondary education should give equal significance to all the English skills in the English curriculum rather than prioritizing writing and reading in examinations. This claim points to the need of practising speaking and listening in ESL classrooms without focusing only on examination-oriented teaching.

Keywords: Language Alienation, Migrant Students, Education

1. Introduction

Globalization has significantly changed the learning environment of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL). This change largely supports for the development of all the sectors in education. Economic and cultural globalization is the key to language internationalization, particularly for the emergence of English as a global lingua franca (Boonkit, 2010). English is increasingly becoming an influential aspect of the international linguistic system. It has developed itself as the de facto international language and is maintaining its dominance through a self-reinforcing mechanism. Most importantly, English has become the dominating language of transnational advertising and popular culture, as well as the primary communicative language in trade and business, governments, management, and academia. (Gebhard, 2012)

Globalization mainly includes the globalization of education, as evidenced by the growing market for cross-border education. Every year, almost 1.7 million learners, almost as many of them are from Asia's non-English speaking developing nations,

migrate across nations to obtain an international education (Situation Report, 2020). In 2001, 73% of Asian students crossed borders to further their education in an English-speaking country (Situation Report, 2020). Most of these students belong to countries where English is taught as a second language and where scholastic approaches to teaching and learning English are common.

Studying abroad, on the other hand, involves more than just "acquiring intellectual or technical knowledge outside one's own social and cultural milieu" (Metraux, 1952). When individuals travel for educational purposes in a socially and culturally alien society for a limited length of time, they engage in a mutual process of learning and adjustment. (Ganschow, Sparks 1991). It is a transmission process that occurs between the host society and the student's home country.

Studying abroad provides worldwide exposure, which is extremely beneficial to one's future development. Students are highly likely to upgrade their status in this fast-changing world with modern technological support. Especially they are interested in worldwide developments and

are willing to interact with people from varied backgrounds, accents, and nationalities on a daily basis. According to previous research, migrant students can notice a major change in their personality and knowledge after completing their education (Smith, 1956). In other words, they tend to be self-motivated, autonomous, prepared for challenges, and capable of handling a variety of difficulties and situations.

Every year, a significant number of Sri Lankan students travel overseas for their studies. Thus, the annual percentage increases gradually. It is important to note that a growing number of emigrant students have opened up new chances for their growth and development, other than furthering their education. If this is the case, migration to higher education is the ideal way to enhance their career prospects.

Cross-cultural interactions, on the other hand, have created new issues of interaction and adjustment among overseas foreign students. While studying abroad, international students should adjust to the host society's educational system and also to the new socio-cultural environment. They are confronted with new language, values, habits, and patterns of new social relationships when they arrive. This confrontation causes issues in familiarizing with and interacting with the new socio-cultural context.

It is strongly argued that the language alienation of international students is the key to most of their challenges and issues. Although international students are required to maintain certain standards in English at the universities, many of them do not have adequate communicative competence in English (Reagan, 2005)

Therefore, the overarching aim of this study is to examine the language barrier of Sri Lankan students studying overseas. Thus, the research was directed by the following objectives: (a) identify the difficulties of Sri Lankan students studying overseas, (b) examine the impact of the language barrier on the overall academic performance of the students, and (c) the solutions to overcome language barriers of migrant students.

2. Review of the Literature

It is certainly no wonder that as instruction and industry have become more globalized, and the amount of Asian students who are studying

in English-speaking nations has expanded, so has research into the concerns, challenges, and difficulties that overseas students encounter in Australia and elsewhere (Park, 2006).

Language Alienation

When people do not share a common tongue or do not have the required level of proficiency in a language, language alienation emerges. This means that, although individuals share a common language, still there are some difficulties to overcome. If people employ inappropriate vocabulary or dialect or slang, which is not comprehended by one or more of the individuals conversing, it can create obstacles (Singh, 2018). The context in which the discussion is occurring and the participants' experience with the topic under discussion can contribute to the formation of such barriers (Boonkit, 2010).

Language difficulties among overseas students are particularly common in Australia, the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom, where students face difficulties in spoken, oral, and written communication (Jones, Line, Robertson, Thomas, 2000). Language challenges exacerbate time pressure, such as recording and listening to lectures again, submission of assessments, and other academic tasks on time (Hellesten Prescott, 2004).

Language Anxiety

Language anxiety refers to the anxiety that develops in acquiring a new language. Second language acquisition studies have divided anxiety into different categories. Trait anxiety is the very first form of anxiety which is characterized as a person's inclination to be apprehensive or tense, regardless of the situation (MacIntyre, 1999). The other type of anxiety is operational anxiety, which occurs when individuals become apprehensive or tense in a specific setting as a result of external stimuli such as their phobia of oral engagement (MacIntyre, 1999). Low self-esteem is the third sort of anxiety in which language users consider what everyone else views of their language. (Cope, Hortwiz, & Hortwiz, 1986).

LA is a feeling of unease and apprehension that a person experiences in acquiring a second language. It is defined as "a specific complicated self-perception, dogmas, and performances related to language attainment and language teaching

emerging from the distinctiveness of the process of language learning” (Cope, Hortwiz, & Hortwiz, 1986). A negative attitude towards the target language is the key reason for creating a boundary between the learner and the language. Hence, teachers need to understand their learners’ perceptions of the new language. Being thoroughly conscious of learners’ language anxiety is vital for applying the necessary tools to aid and advise them (Gebhard, 2012). Teachers can manage anxious students in two ways: (a) assist students in managing anxiety-provoking circumstances, and (b) create the educational process less stressful them. There are a variety of instructional methods and strategies that teachers can use to manage such difficulties.

There is growing evidence in the previous literature to demonstrate how L2 learners’ language anxiety originated. Most importantly, student characteristics such as attitudes, gender, age, mentality, and study habits are the key contributors to foreign language learning anxiety (Dewaele, 2002). Others contend that mother tongue proficiency and unsystematic way of teaching English are the primary causes of language learning anxiety (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). According to Jackson (2002), external factors such as curriculum, classroom activities, teacher’s behavior, and program structure also contribute broadly to develop language anxiety among students. Similarly, as Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna (2014) claim, classroom atmosphere, types of learning activities, and learner motivation impact on students’ anxiety to a considerable extent. Given this background, teachers should have a thorough awareness of the determinants that hinder their students’ language acquisition.

Language Shame and Shaming

According to Canagarajah and Liyanage (2019) doubtfulness to utilize the English language in society, owing to fear of shame, has negatively affected second language acquisition for generations. As Abeysena and Abeywickrama (2020) state, practices of linguistic shame and shaming connected to the use of the English language and significantly hinder users’ willingness to communicate openly in English. Linguistic shame, according to recent studies (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2019; Abeysena & Abeywickrama, 2020), is considered a key reason for the hindrance of students’ English language

proficiency in Sri Lanka. Linguistic shame and shaming mostly occur as a result of L2 users’ change of attitudes and disparities in socio-politics, socio-culture, and socio-economics. Most importantly, linguistic humiliation and shaming limit people’s perspectives and capabilities, which have far-reaching consequences for the development and productivity of a nation (Canagarajah, 2019).

As indicated previously, the social standing of the English language has broadly contributed to foster language alienation, language anxiety, and shame and shaming among the users of English. For many people, it has a marginalizing effect. The societal acceptance that grows with just being able to communicate effectively in English benefits people, their professions, and their social position. Critically, those who lack English skills, on the other hand, are highly likely to develop negative pre-conceptions about their social and educational backgrounds. As validated by previous studies, English skills are vital for securing better employment in the Sri Lankan job market (Abeywickrama, 2021a, 2021b) and in foreign countries (Singh, 2018)

Migrant Students and Foreign Education

Recent studies of international students, notably those undertaken in Australia, have revealed the issues and challenges that migrant students encounter in the English language classroom, given their inadequate knowledge of academic writing, communication strategies, and listening skills. It is important to note that, although migrant learners have a number of academic and social issues and challenges such as a lack of knowledge to use modern internet assisted applications and tools, cultural shock, and societal obstacles, the issue that most students emphasize is the difficulty of speaking English (Singh, 2005).

Robertson et al. (2000) investigated the challenges of foreign students studying at an Australian university. The study used international students and local employees who studied at the same university previously as the participants. Both local workers and the students identified the language barrier as the key reason for the difficulty in understanding instructions and learning. As indicated by the research, migrant learners are doubtful about their capability to communicate in English and also unable to understand the Australian accent thus, they lack the self-esteem to

make presentations in front of Australian students and participate effectively in teaching/learning activities. Furthermore, the use of colloquial language for communication, writing difficulties, and the lack of interpretation skills were also reported broadly (Robertson et al., 2000). As a result of these deficiencies, international students may experience powerlessness, worthlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement (Ramburuth, 2001)

According to the findings of a study conducted on Chinese students in Australia and New Zealand (Campbel & Zeng, 2006), Chinese students do not have many domestic friends in their host countries, and for them, making friends with domestic students is more difficult than making friends with other international student groups studying at the same institution. Especially, Chinese students' inability to communicate effectively in English has encouraged them to network with the Chinese community rather than develop friendships in a host community (Campbel & Zeng, 2006). This perspective has also been supported by an investigation undertaken by Harrison and Peacock (2010). As Hyman and Snook (2001) underscore, changing environmental conditions may also intensify alienation. They claim that being ridiculed and rejected by classmates causes students to feel alienated. Notably, personal experiences of shame can serve as a trigger for antisocial behavior (Rose, 2009). If this is really the case, healthy communication between domestic and international students needs to be established to help transmit mutually pleasant relationships as well as linguistic, cultural, and academic experiences (Boonkit, 2010). This means that, instead of alienating the students, their tension can be eased by acknowledgment and inclusion.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study aims to investigate the challenges and issues of Sri Lankan students who are currently studying in Canada and Australia. As Celik and Ergun (2018) pointed out, the qualitative case study approach can effectively be used to achieve this objective, as it is useful to gain a "holistic understanding, interpretation, and meaning" of the situation.

Context and Participants and Instrument

This study used ten migrant Sri Lankan students studying in Canada and Australia as participants. After completing their Bachelor's degrees in Sri Lanka, all migrated to these countries to pursue their higher education. They, six from Canada and four from Australia, are residing in different suburbs in those countries. Science, Management, Humanities, and Arts were the major subject streams of most students. Sinhala is the first language of nine participants; except for one participant whose first language is Tamil. All participants in the selected group speak English as a second language. The participant group, in their late twenties and early thirties, comprised six females and four males. Table 1 shows the participants' details.

Semi-structured interview was used as the method to gather qualitative data. It basically includes a set of predefined questions, which also can be identified as items, that follow a fixed framework to gather relevant information on single or more detailed subjects (Vaus, 2008). It comprised 21 questions, open and close ended, and interview was conducted online via the zoom platform.

As indicated by the previous researchers, this instrument is more flexible and in-depth than other data collection methods. (Abeywickrama, 2020a, 2020b)

Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a qualitative analysis designed to sort data into categories and find themes and trends. It can display information to a considerable extent and employ participants' perspectives to understand a broad variety of issues (Chen, Kinshuk, Leo, & Teng, 2012). TA "entails a constant back-and-forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data a researcher is analyzing, and the analysis of the data he/she is creating". (Braun & Clarke, 2006) There is growing evidence in the literature to validate that TA was largely used in educational surveys and research (Coldwell, Maxwell, Stiell, & Willis, 2017). (Abeywickrama, 2020a, 2020b). Given that Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA was utilized in this study in order to identify, evaluate, and analyze the findings. The following six steps were used for analyzing data: a) familiarizing with the gathered information, b) creating initial codes, c) exploring

Table 1: Participants' details

Participant	Country	Age	Gender	Study Programme	Academic Year
1	Canada	25	Male	MSc in Chemistry	2 nd Year
2	Canada	25	Male	MA in English	1 st Year
3	Canada	27	Female	MA in Psychology	1 st Year
4	Canada	26	Female	PhD in Chemistry	1 st Year
5	Canada	25	Female	MA in English	1 st Year
6	Canada	24	Female	MA in Education	1 st Year
7	Australia	23	Male	MSc in Marketing Management	1 st Year
8	Australia	25	Male	MA in Education	1 st Year
9	Australia	26	Female	MSc in Accounting	1 st Year
10	Australia	27	Female	MA in English	2 nd Year

for themes, d) evaluating themes, e) specifying and naming themes, and f) making the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During the first phase, the researcher familiarized herself with the data gathered through the questionnaires and noted the initial codes that could describe the content of the collected data. After familiarization with the data, initial codes were developed; a code is a concise summary of what is mentioned in the participant transcript, and it represents an explanation rather than a clarification. The researcher wrote down a code for all the important information in the transcriptions. It is a way to commence grouping information into relevant categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the third phase, the codes formed in stage two were categorized into opinions based on their significance. After that, the key topics were extracted and grouped together as emergent themes (Bartlett, & Liyanage, 2010). Themes are larger and include dynamic explanations of the codes and the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase, the researcher systematically reviewed the set of codes and the extractions that accompanied them and then proceeded to arrange the codes into larger themes. During phase four, the themes discovered in phase three were revisited and improved. Here, the researcher examined all the categorized extracts to determine whether they supported the themes and whether there were conflicts or the themes overlapped. As Braun and Clarke (2006) claim, the information inside the themes should make sense together, and there should be obvious and distinct contrasts between them.

Each theme found in the previous stage was named and labeled during phase five. In this refining process, the researcher could identify diverse conceptions and how they were related to the overarching research question (Abeywickrama, 2019). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the finalized themes need to be descriptive and intriguing, thus the researcher could find a meaning to present a coherent story potentially with the sub-themes. The final phase involves the report writing process. This section presents evidence for each theme in order to ensure the findings' validity by illustrating extracts from participant transcriptions. The final analysis should provide a broad account of what the various themes reveal about the subject investigated (Cote & Turgeon, 2005).

4. Findings and Discussion

After arriving in a new country, international students must complete several duties; this includes locating a place to live, obtaining a social security number, registering for classes, and learning to use the most appropriate mode of transportation. International students, in comparison to their domestic counterparts, necessitate more academic and professional needs and experience challenges and distress during their initial transfer into the university. Loss and a lack of social support have been linked to the migrant students' lower academic achievement as well as unpleasant psychological states such as bewilderment, tension, and sadness.

The reactions to the host country and culture may vary once the students arrive in the new

country. Although some students could increasingly absorb the culture of the host nation others may experience unfavorable feelings, thus they tend to withdraw. The respondents exposed the connection between their English language learning experiences in their home country and their present English-language difficulties in Australia and Canada. Although they believed that they have adequate English language knowledge, this is mainly because they have gained a 6-8 IELTS band score, but their actual experience was different.

Impact of Language Alienation

After arriving in foreign countries to pursue higher education, international students understand that they must adjust to the new culture in the host country. However, for many students, this process appears to be nearly impossible at first. Language barriers, cultural shock, and the stress developed through homesickness broadly impact on how people view things. This homesickness demonstrates their difficulty in adjusting themselves to living somewhere other than their home country (Ramburuth, 2001). As reported by participants, the language barrier is a key factor in the alienation that they experience today. Despite the fact that participants have obtained 6.0-7.5 in IELTS academic, which demonstrates participants' moderate knowledge of English, and have been residing in the host countries for more than six months, each student is marginalized and alienated given their language barrier.

As per the data, the alienated students are shown to be silent, take a seat at the back of the class, act as if they are busy doing something, become late for lectures, withdraw from class activities, and prefer to be alone. The nature of the alienated students' classroom behavior is reflected in their comments. As revealed by Participant 6, for instance, "My main concern while living in Canada was the inability to convey my thoughts and emotions because I had no friends who spoke my mother tongue". Similarly, students' inability to communicate in English, which results in low productivity in the classroom, has largely been reported by participants as another key issue. As individuals' understanding is also limited by language alienation, they lack comprehension and communication skills thus, it obstructs the free flow of data, as in the case of Participant 2.

"In a foreign country, they speak with a different

accent than we do. Therefore, we can only become connected when we are speaking, so it was a little challenging during the first couple of days. So, I struggled to grasp the lectures and refused to participate in the classroom group activities." (Participant-2)

Inadequate communication skills is the key reason for disregarding migrant students during group work and lesson discussions. Moreover, given the lecturers' accents and fluency in English, the majority of the participants hardly absorbed what they were taught in the lectures. Even after the lessons, they were unwilling to contact lecturers for clarifications due to their poor command of the English language. Critically, this phenomenon forced students to be marginalized, foster detached relationships with the native classmates, and sustain a limited connection even with the lecturers. As Foster (2012) claims, students who are unfamiliar with the new academic culture are highly likely to be excluded from classroom discussions and many are anxious to communicating in English because of their local accent (Foster, 2012). As most host countries practice different learning and teaching culture, adjusting to a new academic setting might be difficult for those who have poor communication strategies. Hence, a lack of comprehension of the new school environment and the pedagogical approaches used in international classrooms may negatively impact on the overall educational experience of migrant students (Smith, 1956). According to Terui (2012), a large percentage of foreign students studying in America are unable to communicate with local students due to their lack of English competence. As Terui reveals, international students are reluctant to visit the libraries as they need to seek assistance from the library staff.

It is significant to note that migrant students can perform better than native students as far as the theoretical knowledge is concerned. However, the language barrier has hindered their expressions and the quality of their presentations. This means that, students were unable to demonstrate their knowledge and competencies accurately and satisfactorily to their lecturers, causing them to be dissatisfied with their performance. This perspective, for instance, is effectively reported by Participant 4. "While I was in Effective Communication class, I was worried about my poor

English, and hope it would affect my presentation grade. When we have oral presentations, we memorize the information and recite them in front of the class". According to participants, 80% of them had lower grades because they were unable to present themselves properly in oral examinations despite the fact that they performed better in written examinations. Per se, international students need to allocate additional time for the improvement of their English language proficiency while completing their academic work. This means that language alienation has unfavorably impacted on their performance, thus, hindered in achieving the intended learning outcomes.

In addition, paying the course fee and covering living expenses has become a challenge for migrant students without proper employment. Although they find part-time jobs they cannot upgrade their positions in a context where English is considered the international business language in the world. As Mitra (2005) claims, even if one has amazing ideas, if English is inadequate, he/she is placed at the bottom of the managerial ladder. Securing a job even in non-English speaking countries is highly dependent on English skills. In such a context, finding a job in Canada or in Australia where English is the first language, has become extremely difficult for migrant students. Many participants revealed this phenomenon through their perspectives, for example, as demonstrated by Participant 2, "Finding a good part-time job necessitates a higher level of English proficiency. However, I was turned down from several interviews due to my inadequate command of the English language". Furthermore, most participants reported that they were anxious to face the interviews as the panels often comprise native English speakers. On the other hand, they have no self-esteem to work with such people. Thus, despite their capability to work in a high position during their studies they are inclined to work for a lower salary as in the case of Participant 7. "It was difficult to overcome challenges in the workplace with a weak command of the English language, as a result of my terrible English, I had to leave two decent jobs".

According to the data provided by the respondents, migrant students encounter challenges and issues in their social lives apart from the classrooms owing to their insufficient English language skills. Participants find it extremely difficult to converse with natives of different dialects at various social

functions and events they attend, thus, they tended to feel socially isolated and lonely. Participant 6 reflected on this situation effectively. "During my period of arrival, I usually avoided all the festivities due to my poor knowledge of English. I had no friends and had to find friends for myself". Similarly, many respondents claimed that they were ignored at social gatherings because they lacked the courage to participate in social activities.

In general, when Sri Lankan students arrive in foreign countries for higher studies they have many expectations. Enhancing English language competence, completing their studies on time, finding a job for economic assistance, and securing a well-paid job for the improvement of their future life are key aims they are working for. If Sri Lankan students studying in Canada and Australia have better English skills, they would feel comfortable in those countries. Their inability to communicate in a professional manner has hindered them from becoming genius in the host country. As Foucault (1981) conceptualized, students' growing language skills can be viewed as a source of power, facilitating or obstructing their learning and interactions with one another, particularly, social mechanisms of race, class, gender, culture, and geography defined mostly this power.

Prior English Learning Experience

The prior learning experience is universally accepted as a constructive aspect that facilitates learning. This is true for all students, whether they are international or domestic. Students who migrate to foreign countries from various educational backgrounds and conventions apply their prior knowledge and experience in different ways to improve their performance. As Foster (2012) underscores, students' adjustment to a more inactive form of learning, such as lack of participation and disengagement in classroom activities demonstrates that they have no previous experience to contribute. There is a similar connection between what migrant students currently encounter in the lectures and the learning experience they gained in Sri Lanka.

English education in Sri Lanka mostly focuses on students' reading and writing skills rather than enhancing their listening and speaking competence. English curriculum in Sri Lankan state schools, for example, has disregarded teaching speaking

and listening, and prioritized reading, grammar, and vocabulary, as only these skills are evaluated through the examinations. Participants broadly criticized this practice:

"The students were flooded with grammar instruction so, they gained thorough awareness of word classes. Regardless of the difficulties this caused in their listening and speaking, they were certain that grammar was the most important component of learning English." (Participant 10)

In primary and secondary education in Sri Lanka, syllabi and text books are considered vital because they direct teachers on what to practise in the ESL classroom. As reported, syllabus and materials designers consider English syntax and semantics are essential for the improvement of English knowledge thus, school text books mainly comprise them. Conversely, students understood the value of listening and speaking after migrating to foreign countries for their higher studies, as in the case of Participant 7;

"English was only taught as a subject in schools, not as a language. As a result, neither teachers nor students gave English Language a high priority. However, when I arrived in Australia, I became aware of the misunderstanding of that concept." (Participant 7)

Participant 1 also had a similar perspective in terms of what they learned in the schools for English. "In Sri Lanka, the schools emphasize writing and reading while ignoring the most important aspects of communication and listening". This means that students did not have sufficient time and opportunities to enrich their English communication and listening skills during their school time. Although the primary aim of the communicative approach, which is currently being used in Sri Lankan schools, is to promote the communicative competence of learners through student-centered, task-based collaborative practices, there are no adequate opportunities for oral communication in ESL lessons. Furthermore, students' anxiety and shame and shaming to use English in the classroom may inhibit their active engagement in collaborative activities, thus they lose the chance to improve their English communication skills (Canagarajah, 2019). Critically, ESL teachers' lack of English proficiency and training, an excessive number of students in a classroom, and the use of the Mother Tongue as the medium for

classroom practices may also cause students not to achieve the expected learning outcome in speaking and listening. Participants also claimed that they did not have sufficient opportunities to utilize the speaking skills beyond the classroom, either through organized functions at school or in the socio-cultural community.

As indicated, participants' lack of prior learning experience may be the key reason for the language alienation that they currently experience in these foreign countries. As the medium of instruction of their degree/postgraduate degree programs is English, language alienation has become a serious issue in their lives now. However, as exposed by many participants, English medium instruction is unsupportive for the enrichment of their communication and listening skills, as they mostly focused on writing and reading skills necessary for their studies. Maintaining the required grade point average (GPA) was important to them thus, they did not make a concerted attempt to improve their English proficiency.

Adjustment Strategies

The findings of the study reveal how migrant students suffer from a variety of transition problems that can hinder their academic quality and the quality of their lives while studying overseas. Although foreign universities frequently offer guidance, instructions, and facilities for the advancement of migrant students, the personal experiences of the Sri Lankan students studying overseas would be beneficial for those who are interested in pursuing higher studies in those countries in the future. Participants of this investigation reported many solutions for language alienation which can be grouped into two primary categories.

Prior Entering to the Country

For participants, reading is the most effective method to develop their vocabulary and learn how to write accurately and precisely without grammatical mistakes. Especially, by reading English language periodicals on a regular basis, prospective students could find numerous words that may be required for their studies and social discourse (Participant 3). Similarly, listening to the radio can broadly support students to familiarize with the accent and the language of the lecturers, as in the case of Participant 6;

Listen to radio stations of those countries, even though we don't understand at first, we have to keep listening and make it a habit to listen to radio stations on a regular basis. After the broadcast, it is better to practice pronouncing the words correctly and regularly. (Participant 6)

The majority of the participants believed that prospective students should also enhance their speaking competence in parallel with other English skills. According to the respondents' perspectives, one of the key issues of students with weak English is the lack of classroom voice and presentation. Participant 4, for instance, reported the importance of conversing in English without being anxious and shame and shamed. "We should not be afraid to speak in English. It will be impossible to enrich our speaking skills if we never learn to take risks and open our tongues". In addition, as a recommendation for addressing language alienation, for new students, it is better to give a strong emphasis on the importance of the English language and develop a personal reading and writing culture. On the other hand, the current students can follow additional English courses that may improve their ability of public speaking.

After Entering the Country

As far as language exposure is concerned, the findings revealed that all the participants followed various methods and strategies to overcome language alienation after they entered their respective countries. They typically engage themselves in an English-speaking culture by listening to English songs, and learning the language by studying with native English speakers. As Boonkit (2010) claims, listening to English speakers attentively helps enhance learners' speaking skills in terms of tone, rhythm, and accent. The connection between speaking and listening has been validated by previous studies (Rubin, 2006). Especially, learners who desire to be proficient in speaking English should broadly be exposed to the English language, both in terms of receptive and productive skills. This perspective was effectively reflected by Participant 10;

I attended the orientation week before the semester began. When I met other international students from various cultures for the first time, I tended to hide. But I was now forced to communicate in English with them. What I thought was at least, I would be able to practice

my language skills. (Participant 10)

Moreover, participants are increasingly attempting to expose themselves to the new community and culture with the aim of minimizing the issues of language alienation. Some participants, for example, were looking for a domestic English-speaking partner as their roommates, while others became members of different student organizations so as to share the native students' culture through socializing. Participant 7, for instance, has taken an active role in a variety of campus activities in order to extend the social networks. When it came to joining a student club, I forced myself to join native students' club. So that, I can improve my language skills while learning about diverse cultures". The findings of the study also indicate how participants could develop the vocabulary that they may require for their studies and social life. Participant 4 explained this process effectively;

You might only learn one word at a time when learning a new language. You could even keep a vocabulary book and add new words to it. Memorizing phrases or pairs of words instead of individual words will help you learn faster. This will not only aid in the acquisition of a larger vocabulary, but it will also aid in the recall of the context in which those terms are used. (Participant 4)

In addition, respondents emphasized the necessity of speaking in English without being seriously concerned about mistakes. It would help enhance migrant students' English language proficiency as well as self-confidence, as commented by Participant 7. "We should concentrate on expressing ourselves and articulating what we want to say. Worry about the grammar later! No one will question about our mistakes. Natives are pleased with our interest to learn their language and will encourage us" (Participant 7). It is important to note that all the participants were risk takers, thus despite the grammatical errors, they tend to use English in public. This demonstrates that risk-taking is a necessary characteristic of language acquisition (Singh, 2018).

5. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, language alienation has adversely affected Sri Lankan students studying in Canada and Australia. It has (a) hindered the academic performance of migrant

students, (b) marginalized them in society, and (c) made them incapable of finding an employment to cover the basic needs. The study identified migrant students' lack of prior learning experience as the key reason for the language alienation that they experience at present.

If students are to develop English language proficiency, they must take some responsibility for finding strategies to improve their English skills. These complications, on the other hand, drive international students to develop problem-solving abilities. They tend to produce new learning approaches to cater for their requirements as they develop autonomous learning. As alteration and adaptation consume more time and energy, they require more guidance from the outer world. Especially, the universities are primarily responsible for the provision of resources and additional support that the migrant students may require for their studies. Per se, the institutions should focus on the English language difficulties of the migrant students and guide them with more adequate support. Overall, despite the language alienation that they experienced upon arrival, a thorough selection of instruments, language tasks, learning resources, and appropriate strategy and language training resulted in successful language usage and students' performance improvement.

6. Implications

The findings of this research would be beneficial for Canadian and Australian universities, and other higher educational institutions in the world to identify how language alienation has hindered international students' academic performance and thereby assisting them to achieve the intended learning outcomes. To begin with, universities can design overseas students a special English course and provide them with resources for improving their language skills. As the language barrier obstructs students' involvement in different activities and social awareness other than their academic achievements, institutions can host programs to teach international students how to communicate effectively in formal and informal situations. Counseling and consultation programs are also required for international students because they necessitate direction in order to excel in their academic studies as well as for their psychological stress. Research findings also point to the need for the Sri Lankan education system to make

the required changes in the English curriculum in Sri Lankan universities, schools, and other similar institutions in a way it meets the English language requirements needs of students. Specifically, the findings of this study have implications for students who may migrate to foreign countries for their higher studies in the future.

7. Limitations, Future Research Possibilities

Despite the fact that the study's findings are advantageous to all the Sri Lankan migrant students who are attempting to overcome the language barrier, the participant group did not include migrant students from other countries. This has, to some extent, hindered the opportunity for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, as this study only looked at a limited set of Sri Lankan migrant students in Canada and Australia, the results should be regarded with caution. As a result, the outcomes' generalizability outside of this sample of overseas learners is limited.

Future research should look into the perspectives of migrant students from other countries. Specially, how other variables which were not considered in this research such as ethnicity, religion, sex, age, and personality, impact on international students' language alienation should also be extensively examined in future studies.

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