Learners' Perceptions on Acculturation: A Case Study of Adult Arab Learners of Finnish as Second Language (FSL) in Finland

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1. INTRODUCTION

Finland, like many other European countries, receives the ever increasing number of asylum seekers, quota immigrants (UN refugees), returnees who are former Finnish citizens, as well as descendants of Finnish citizens by birth (Railo, 2012; Yijäl, 2012; Poyhonen & Tarnanen, 2015), besides people who come from different parts of the world to work in Finland. Nevertheless, "Immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon in Finland" (Razgulina-Lytsy, 2012:9). In 2023 and according to formal statistics, 40,588 immigrants from different countries arrived in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2024). The highest rates were from countries, namely, Ukraine, Iraq, Somalia, Russia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria. However, the number of immigrants is still small if compared to some other countries in Europe (Poyhonen & Tarnanen, 2015; Railo, 2012). The mounting number of immigrants is due to wars and restive political situations in these countries, Oguntuyi (1998), in addition to economic difficulties in some African countries. During the period that extended between 1987 and 2013, about 31,941 immigrants entered Finland. 19,386 were adults (25 to75 years old) that is about 61.29 % of the total number (Statistics Finland, 2016).

The percentage of Arab immigrants to Finland is significant. The number increased rapidly after the Anglo-American invasion to Iraq in addition to the rise of conflict in countries e.g., Syria and Yemen. See Table 1.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
National language, total	5 112 648	5 100 946	5 090 199	5 067 978
Finnish	4 822 690	4 811 067	4 800 243	4 778 891
Swedish	287 954	287 871	287 933	287 052
Estonian	49 427	49 551	50 232	50 318
Arabic	*31 920*	*34 282*	*36 466*	*39 069*

Table 1. Population by languages in Finland. Source: Extracted from *Statistical Year Book 2023*

Considering table 1 we can see that the number of Arabs living in Finland is continually increasing. The total number was (31 920) in 2019 and increased dramatically to (39 069) in 2022. The need for acculturation and learning the native Finnish language increased too.

Finnish language, which belongs to Finno-Ugrian language family (Igbarria, 2002; White, 2006; Laine, 2010; Martin, 2011) is essential and crucial for people who immigrate to Finland to integrate into the Finnish host society. Immigrants in Finland are subjected to the integration programme that is administered and supervised by the Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy and Finnish language courses are part of this programme. Immigrants integrate best into Finnish society if they know Finnish or Swedish, (Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2015). The importance of Finnish language courses for immigrants is also emphasized by (Laine, 2010:77) "as an essential requirement for integration". The ability to speak the language of the host society usually plays an important role in the process of integration, because it is a precondition for participation (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008). During the integration period, which usually lasts about three years (Finnish Integration Act 439, 1999 p.10), the immigrants are supposed to learn Finnish language in addition to some other skills according to the refugees' previous experiences to enter the Finnish labour market, (Naif & Noor, 2018).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Finnish is deemed second language for the Arab immigrants in Finland. They need Finnish for communicative purposes in their daily life within the Finnish host community, "Refugees or immigrants usually have to learn a second language in order to survive in their adopted country" (Oxford, 1990:8). However, there are a number of challenges faced by adult Arab learners during their FSL learning process. These challenges are mainly attributed to age factor related to the learners, the Finn stereotype, and life style related to the host society. In the Finnish language classes, allocated for adult immigrants, learners are heterogeneous with regard to age, educational background, language aptitude, motivation, and the purpose of attending the course.

The impetus for conducting this research is the fact that adult Arab immigrants to Finland are facing kind of difficulty in acculturating into the Finnish host society. The researcher is an immigrant living in Finland and subjected to the Finnish integration programme. It is noted that the majority of the adult Arab immigrants encounter social distances within the Finnish community, (Naif, 2022). And that is apparent through the difficulties they face in learning Finnish which is inevitable to start their new life in Finland. Interaction between the learners' group and host society group is essential for acculturation and better Second Language (SL) acquisition (Shumann, 1989). The Finnish society is rather isolated and Finns are inclined not to socialise with foreigners (Naif, 2022; Moles, 2016; Peterson, 2009; Jaworski, 1997). Finns tend to socialise in places such as bars and night clubs. These places are not suitable for most of adult Arab immigrants due to difference in culture and traditions. However, it might be suitable for young immigrants to practice their SL and integrate into the Finnish society (Naif & Noor, 2018).

There is a large chasm between the adult Arab immigrants' backgrounds and the Finnish host society for instance the family of their native language is "central Semitic Language" (Sayed, 2015:21). Apparently, there is no commonality between the Arab immigrants as SL group and the Finns as the host society group i.e., language, culture, religion, traditions, and norms (Naif, 2022).

The literature lacks in-depth study (in English) that investigate the reality of the acculturation process of adult Arabs immigrants in Finland, who take up the majority of immigrants in Finland. There is a serious need to remedy the gap in the literature in respect with investigating the acculturation process of the adult Arab FSL learners in Finland.

1.2 Research Question

What are the perceptions on acculturation of Adult Arab FSL learners of Finnish in Finland?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 SL Learning and Anxiety Factor

Dornyei (2005:198) opined, that anxiety can be viewed from two different angles; affective and cognitive. He argued that the 'affective component' of anxiety is sometimes 'beneficial', has positive impact on the learner, and promotes language learning. However, the 'cognitive component' of anxiety has a 'debilitating' effect on the learner that obstructs good performance, e.g., 'worry'. Moreover, Dornyei presented two types of anxiety; trait and state anxiety. The former refers to an innate trait, in which some people are born with it; however, the latter is when an individual temporarily experiences anxiety in an emotional reaction to a certain situation.

Oxford (1990:124) presented different guises of anxiety, i.e., "worry, self-doubt, frustration, helplessness, insecurity, fear, and physical symptoms". She also argued that "anxiety can also occur when students have low motivation, when the language learning process is forced, annoying, irrelevant, style-conflicting, or generally unsuccessful" (Oxford, 1992:36).

In the same vein, two forms of anxiety were presented by Oxford (1992:35) 'trait anxiety' and 'situational anxiety'. She also argued that anxiety can be "facilitating" or "debilitating". The former helps in learning L2 while the latter disrupts and leads to low performance.

The impact of 'fear' and 'insecurity' as two anxiety aspects suggested by Oxford (1990) was overt on most of the FSL learners' performance who live under the stress of an atmosphere fueled with resentment against asylum seekers besides the fact that Finnish is difficult language for the adult FSL learners (by nature) at syntactic and semantic level. With respect to the morphological, orthographic, and syntactic differences. "The differences between ideographic and alphabetic languages are even more striking" (Loh, 2019:8).

Kosic (2006) confirmed the impact of anxiety factor on the acculturation process and opined that immigrants' adaptation to a new culture and society usually encounters a number of stressors represented by; learning a new language, getting a work, dealing with regulations, adjusting to a different system of education, and dealing with a different life system in terms of values, beliefs, and traditions.

2.2 The Acculturation Model

Acculturation is "the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group" (Schumann, 1986:29). Schumann deemed culture as essential to the process of second language acquisition. He presented his Acculturation Model (1978) and proposed that second language level of acquisition depends on the degree to which a learner acculturates to the second language group. This model includes social variables (related to language learning by group of people) and affective variables (related to language learning by individuals). Social variables comprise social dominance, (assimilation, preservation, and adaptation), enclosure, cohesiveness and size, congruence, attitude, and intended length of residence. On the other hand, the affective variables comprise language shock, cultural shock, motivation, and ego permeability.

Berry (2017:19) defined acculturation as "a dual process of cultural and psychological changes that takes place as result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individuals member". He also argued that people groups undergo acculturation comprise "immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, sojourners, ethno-cultural groups and indigenous people". He also suggested three variables decide the changes that accompany, or be the result of, the acculturation process. These variables can be put under three classifications; (voluntary-involuntary), (sedentary-migrant), and (permanent-temporary). The first group is related to people who have decided to move by themselves or were forced to move. The second group is related to people who have settled on their homeland whiles other have sought some elsewhere to settle. The last group is related to people who have settled into another society permanently while others moved to stay temporarily.

Sam (2006:11) also defined acculturation and argued that "Acculturation covers all the changes that arise following contact between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds". Schumann (1978) Acculturation Model was designed and based on the sociocultural point of view and tackled the social and psychological changes that accompany the process of acculturation. Accordingly it is appropriate to be the frame work for this study.

2.3 Accultulturation and SL learning

For immigrants, acculturation and SL acquisition are related and complete each other; efficiency in SL eases the process of acculturation and good integration helps in rapid SL learning. Jiang et al., (2009) echoed this opinion and argued that "the essence of successful L2 acquisition is to identify with, and get involved in, the target culture socially and affectively". Supporting this notion, Brown (2000:182) correlated between SL learning and acculturation that "SLL involves the acquisition of a second identity; this creation of a new identity is at the heart of culture learning, or what some might call acculturation".

According to Zane & Mak (2003), the use of language is the most commonly utilised domain in assessing acculturation. The relation between acculturation and SL learning is widely acknowledged by many researchers, namely (Naif, 2018; Naif

& Noor, 2018; Mwai & Ghaffar, 2014; Hasting, 2012; Spenader, 2011; Fan, 2010; Jiang et al 2009; Zane & Mak, 2003; Igbarria, 2002; Brown, 2000; Oguntuyi, 1998; Schumann, 1986). Learning the language of the host society is a key for better acculturation into the new society.

From the definitions mentioned above, we gather that acculturation is a compulsory social and affective change in the identity and behaviour of immigrants or sojourners. The researcher, as an immigrant and FSL learner living in Finland, supports that acculturation process is not optional by any means. Immigrants have to learn and adopt new things about the norms and culture of the host society. In addition, immigrants need to modify some of their former life styles and some old habits that are not in line with the new host community and culture. For example, Finns are organized people and there are rigid rules that regulate their lives. For instance, most people reside in block form accommodations where no noise is allowed between 8 pm and 6 am. In addition, they are very punctual in appointments at both formal and informal levels. However, some immigrants are not used to live in such organised lifestyles. The aforementioned examples are part of compulsory acculturations for immigrants who want to live in Finland. The reviewed literature revealed a number of studies that tackled the correlation between acculturation and SL learning and the following parts explain that.

In the Finish scenario, Nurmi & kontiainen (1995) studied how adult immigrants learn FSL. The researchers emphasized the importance of exposure to the target language for the purpose of adaptation. They opined that language learning by adult immigrants is rather limited as learners usually acquire skills of the target language from refugee camps and learning centres. The researchers also reported that autonomy scarcity influences the adaptation process and makes it slow even when immigrant is willing to learn.

In Finland also, Oguntuyi (1998) investigated the factors that affect the acculturation process of seven African immigrant women living in Finland. The data revealed that integration into the Finnish society is hindered by many factors such as the unequal rapport between African women and Finnish women and the negative attitude of the majority of Finns towards foreigners, mainly Africans. Good language skills in Finnish have a great influence on the immigrant's life as it helps them to acculturate to the Finnish society.

Investigating the role of Finnish language in the integration process, Mwai & Ghaffar (2014) conducted a qualitative study and utilized five immigrant women who spent two years in Finland. The results indicated some significant findings; Finnish language is essential in the process of integration into the Finnish society, the Finns are antisocial with immigrants, and the integration process is slow and this is due to the fact that immigrant women have to wait for a long time to be enrolled in Finnish language course. Moreover, weak communication skills in Finnish demotivate them and make them feel excluded.

In the same vein, Naif & Noor (2018) studied the influence of the acculturative social variables, proposed buy Schumann (1986) on the acculturation process of a number of adult Arab immigrants learning FSL. The study sample was subjected to the integration programme. The findings revealed that social distance, as a crucial factor in the acculturation process, was prominent between the participants and the Finnish host society, yet they reported the intention to stay in Finland for good. Adaptation was reported to be the participants' integration pattern. The findings also showed lack of interactive social activities between the participants and the Finnish host society resulted from lack of similarity between the participants' native culture and that of the host Finnish society.

Igbarria (2002) carried out a study to find out the extent to which English is used (instead of Finnish) and proficiency in FSL among 40 male Arabs ages ranged between 15-55 years. The findings revealed that the participants' proficiency in English is higher than that in Finnish, as it is integratively motivated. On the other hand, Finnish is usually used at service and work domains. It is very clear that motivation toward learning Finnish is instrumental. Many of the participants are married to Finnish women and lived for long time in Finland, nonetheless, the findings showed that male immigrants were more fluent at English than Finnish. This might be attributed to the fact that Finnish is rather difficult language and immigrants prefer to communicate in English whenever they can.

From other parts of the world and in the same context, a qualitative study was conducted by Hubenthal (2004) to investigate the experiences in learning English as a Second Language (ESL) of 10 Russian immigrants in the US. The findings show that the participants were motivated to integrate into the American society, engage in meaningful communication, and be autonomous. However, they encountered some impediments, e.g., memory, shame, health problems, and lack of accessible ESL courses.

In Sweden, Spenader (2011) investigated the relationship between acculturation and SL learning. Four American sojourners to Sweden participated in this qualitative study and the results showed that assimilation was adopted by the four American sojourners as an acculturation strategy. The participants showed a good progress in learning Swedish and assimilated into the Swedish society. The findings also revealed that acculturation is correlated to high language proficiency. On the contrary, low language proficiency is correlated to the rejection of the target language and culture by the SL learners. Nevertheless, the results are different in Hasting's (2012) study that came up with clear evidence about the relationship between acculturation and SL acquisition and how they support and complete each other. The 11 EFL teachers involved in Hasting's study lived in housing compounds in Saudi Arabia and were completely segregated from the Saudi Society. The

participants were interested in learning about the culture of the Saudi society; however, the process of acculturation was not facilitated because of the insulated life and the huge social distance between them.

Fan (2010) opined that culture and language are related to each other and language difference might cause culture shock and that depends on the individual himself. He also argued that language shock can be caused by linguistic and sociolinguistic factors. The former refers to differences between the target language and the SL learner's native language in terms of grammar rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation while learning new language. The latter is related to the linguistic habits or the use of some expressions that do not exist in the SL learner's native language.

Jiang et al. (2009) studied the relationship between acculturation and L2 acquisition. The study also explored the extent to which acculturation is associated with English language speaking proficiency. The participants were Chinese immigrant students arrived in the USA after puberty age. The results emphasized the relationship between acculturation and the SL learning and that acculturation process relates to speaking proficiency. This finding is compatible with Oguntuyi's (1998) finding, i.e., language proficiency is essential for better acculturation into the host society.

The aforementioned studies are congruent with the hypothesis of the current study that SL learning and acculturation are correlated and complete each other. The current study is in line with (Naif & Noor, 2018; Mwai & Ghaffar, 2014; Hasting, 2012; Spenader, 2011; Jiang et al., 2009; Hubenthal, 2004; Oguntuyi, 1998; Nurmi & kontiainen, 1995) studies when adult learners were included as participants, however adult Arab immigrant FSL learners are the sample of the current study . Moreover, these studies are in accordance with what the current study tries to prove; i.e., the significance of exposure to the SL for better acculturation.

The results of Hubenthal's (2004) study are compatible with the findings of Mwai & Ghaffar (2014) study and inline with the reality of the FSL course assigned for immigrants in Finland. The Russian adult ESL learners (immigrant in the US) and FSL adult Arab learners (immigrants in Finland) share the same problem. In both cases adult learners find it difficult to attend L2 language courses. They have to wait for months or sometimes a year to attend a course to study the target language, which in turn affects their SL learning and hamper their acculturation process into the host society.

Findings drawn from Fan (2010), Naif & Noor Saazai (2018), Mwai & Ghaffar (2014) and Nurmi & kontiainen (1995) studies are inline with what the current study has hypothesized. The linguistic and cultural disparities between the SL learners and host society. The linguistic and cultural background of the current study sample are completely different from those of the Finnish host society in terms of language family, culture, norms, habits and religion. The cultural chasm is large. Naif & Noor (2018), Mwai & Ghaffar (2014), Hubenthal (2004), Oguntuyi (1998), and Nurmi & kontiainen (1995) studies emphasized the impact of the social distance (between the FSL and the Finnish host society) on the process of acculturation on FSL. Besides the lack of social interaction. Social interaction conducive to positive emotions and for FSL learners, social and cultural interaction is essential not only in the process of learning Finnish, the target language, but also in acculturation into the host society (Naif, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY /PARTICIPANTS

The study aims at investigating the perceptions and experiences of nine adult Arab (male and female) learners of FSL on the process of acculturation. According to Cresswell (2008:213) "in purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and site to learn or understand the central phenomenon". This category of learners are newcomers to Finland and usually live with no or limited interaction with the host Finnish community.

The participants are taking beginner level course in Finnish at 'Helsingin Aikuisopisto' Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki city and they are of different backgrounds and different levels of education received at their home countries. The participants are immigrants from two war-torn countries, Iraq and Syria and have spent between 14 months -3 years in Finland. They are Muslims and their ages ranged between 22-49 years old. 7 participants (three females and four males) are from Iraq and 2 (one female and one male) are from Syria.

3.1 Research methods

What are the perceptions on acculturation of Adult Arab FSL learners of Finnish in Finland?

To answer the research question, a qualitative paradigm was adopted in the present study that follows a case study paradigm. The effectiveness of qualitative research has been emphasised and defined by many researchers (Yin, 2014: Creswell, 2008: , Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). For example, Creswell (1998:15) opined that qualitative research is "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem".

3.2 Data collection method

In-depth interview was utilised as data collection methods in the present study. Interview is one of the significant "sources of case study evidence" in qualitative research (Yin, 2014:110). Describing the advantages of interview as an

important data collection method, Creswell (2008:226) opined that interviews "provide useful information when you cannot directly observe participants, and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information". In the same vein, Bogdan & Biklen (1998:94) supported the prominence of interview in qualitative research and argued that "Interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world".

The aim of the interviews was to elicit the participants' perceptions and experiences towards their new life in Finland and the relation with the Finnish host society and were guided by Schumann's (1986) Acculturation Model. The Acculturation Index was also utilised to support the qualitative data.

3.3 The Acculturation Index

After obtaining the consent from one of the authors, Professor Colleen Ward, an Arabic version (translated and modified by the researcher, see Appendix 2) of The Acculturation Index (adapted from Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999) was used to measure the acculturative level for each of the 9 participants. The indication scale was modified and simplified to the three levels of acculturation proposed by Schumann (1986) instead of seven. For example, the participant marks number 1 for preservation if he/she feels that his attitude or behaviour does not match with a certain item in the list, 2, if he feels in-between and that is adaptation, and 3, if he feels completely matching a certain cultural item in the list and that is assimilation.

4. FINDINGS COLLECTED FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Table 2 illustrates themes emerged in the interviews and include success and challenges, communication difficulties, and language learning difficulties.

Theme		Participants' Perceptions	Extracts from interviews
a. Challenges		Negative/ anxiety& social distance	*I have a state of mental disorder and instability, if one feels comfortable acquires language better,* (E, inter_1) "*When I want to read a word in the class, all the students start to laugh and I used to feel very shy and cannot continue*" (D, inter_1) "*No, I do not share with Finns any social activities. I feel that my family is isolated here*" (I, inter_1) "*Only yesterday I met one Finnish lady who did not reply when I asked her a question.* (D, inter_2)
b. communication difficulties		lack of communication & lack of language skills	"*The Finns do not prefer to interact with foreigner… the school is not enough; interaction with native speakers is more important and more beneficial for language learning*" (A, inter _1) "*Finns have very complicated personality; they do not like to be close to anybody, there must be a distance*" (B, inter_1) "*communication with Finns is limited to greeting only when I meet some neighbours*" (C, inter_ 1) "*Maybe sometimes in the metro but not real interaction because I cannot speak Finnish*" (F, inter_1) "*Both, my poor Finnish language and the taciturn Finnish personality*" (I, inter_1)
c. Learning Difficulties		Finnish is difficult	"*vowels are another problem in learning Finnish, for example, when doubling the vowel (a) the whole meaning of the word changes. The use of vowels is difficult also in Finnish*" (A, inter_1) "*there are some letters do not exist in English language like ä, ö, and the Swedish å. The double letters in Finnish are …problem too*" (B, inter_1) "*there are some letters do not exist in English language like ä, ö, and the Swedish å. The double letters in Finnish are …problem too*" (B, inter_1)
		Integration programme	"*in one Finnish class you can find different level of learners.* (B, inter_1)

			"The labour office keeps you (immigrant) waiting for long time, one year sometimes. For me I kept waiting for about one year to get a two- days a week course" (I, inter_1)
Success		Positive/ progress	*"Yes, of course, in the school now I can understand some vocabulary in Finnish"* (F,inter_1) *"I feel very happy in this course and feel it is very useful the teacher explains every single word"* (D, inter_1)

Table 2. Themes emerged from the interviews

4.1 Findings from the Acculturation Index

Table 3 shows data collected from the Acculturation Index. Four themes emerged, integration mood, social distance, enclosure, and commonalities. The following sections will discuss the findings in detail.

Theme	Findings
Integration mood	Almost all of the participants chose preservation of their culture and identity as their integration strategy and the average of their acculturation rate was 1.2 and that is preservation.
Social distance	Social and cultural distance between the participants and the Finnish society. Different social values, religion, food, life style, and language.
Enclosure	High level of enclosure, participants do not share the Finns social activities, cultural activity, entertainment activities, following local media, or schools.
commonalities	Disparity between the two cultures in terms of language, religion, food, life style, social and cultural values, communication style, and family life.

Table 3. Findings from the Acculturation Index

5. DISCUSSION FOR THEME 1 - SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES

The participants experienced both negative and positive feelings. The former was represented by; (anxiety, communication difficulties, learning difficulties) and the latter was represented by the sense of self-esteem (motivation) and when the learners felt good about themselves while learning Finnish. Refer to Appendix 1.

Apparently the high level of anxiety reported by the participants evoked the negative feelings of the participants. The participants experienced the effect of anxiety because of the insular life in which they are involved and the lack of interaction with the host Finnish society. The effect of anxiety factor, as an impediment for SL learning, was clear on the participants. The impact of anxiety factor on SL learning and acculturation was confirmed by; (Oxford, 1992; Dornyei, 2005; and Kosic, 2006).

The data revealed that the influence of 'fear' and 'insecurity' anxieties was overt on most of the participants' performance who live under the stress of an atmosphere fueled with resentment against asylum seekers and the hostile Finnish public opinion. This was the negative aftermaths of the unprecedented waves of immigrants that arrived in Finland between 2015 and 2016. This negative attitude against immigrants might be justified that the Finnish society is unaccustomed to multicultural life and sharing life with immigrants is something relatively new for them.

FSL learners depend entirely on the pecuniary benefits for living and joining the Finnish courses is related to the continuity of this social assistance. According to Oxford (1992:36), "anxiety can also occur when language learning process is forced".

Anxiety experienced by the participants was described by Oxford (1992) as 'situational anxiety' and by Dornyei (2005) as 'state anxiety'. Apparently it is "debilitating anxiety" that impedes the SL learning and leads to low performance in SL leaning (Oxford,1992:35). And that is due to the lack of communication between the teacher and the FSL learners besides the poor discipline of some learners in the Finnish classes i.e., they laugh at their classmates when making mistakes. This can create a threatening learning environment for the FSL learners and impedes the learning process.

Positive feelings and success experienced by some participants refer to a high degree of self-esteem, "Good self-esteem helps individuals to overcome failure and difficulties" (Kosic, 2006:25). In other words, learners with high self-esteem learn better and faster than learners with low self-esteem. This is also related to motivation factor, the essence of any learning process and acculturation into a new host society. Motivation factor is deemed crucial and affect the process of SL learning and hence acculturation process; (Loh, 2019; Stefánsson, 2013; Oxford, 1990; Mwai & Ghaffar, 2014; Hubenthal, 2004; Igbarria, 2002; Hubenthal, 2004; Naif, 2018 and Naif, 2022). Immigrants are the people who leave their home country seeking

better life elsewhere, (Berry, 2017), thereby they need to keep themselves motivated and overcome the impediments in their resettlement process. According to Loh (2019), SL learner's performance and motivation for SL learning are correlated and chances of success increase when they perform well.

Schumann (1986) and Berry (2017) emphasized the correlation between a successful acculturation process and the time immigrant intend to stay within the host society. This variable is confirmed by the participants who strongly reported their intention to stay in Finland for good and that is a big motivation for success. However, the aforementioned impediments might be enough reasons to justify the slow progress in both FSL learning and acculturating into the Finnish host society.

6.   DISCUSSION FOR THEME 2 - COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

Stefánsson (2013) presented three factors that affect the process of language learning. These factors included motivation, exposure to the target language, and the kind of surrounding in which the SL learner is involved. Apparently, the second and the third factors explain the difficulties encountered by the participants in learning Finnish. For the adult FSL learners, the lack of communication with the Finnish host society impedes the acculturation process. Adult Arab FSL learners mainly communicate and practice the new words they learn with their teachers in the classroom and in some cases with non-Arab learners of Finnish in the class and that conducive to social isolation. FSL teacher is the main reference for the learners who explains for them the important holidays and occasions Finnish people like to celebrate, for example.

Data collected from the interviews and the Acculturation Index were identical. When asked to identify how close they are to the Finnish; social values, religion, food, life style, and language, the participants reported the social and cultural distance between themselves and the Finnish society. This in turn influences the communicative competence of the learners. The high level of enclosure, reported by the participants means the lowest level in the integration scale, i.e., preservation. The adult Arab FSL learners do not share the Finns; social activities, cultural activities, work, entertainment activities, following local media, or schools. This can be attributed to the nature of the Finnish society and Finn stereotype that tend not to mingle with foreigners in general, (Moles, 2016; Peterson, 2009; Jaworski, 1997). Schumann (1986) proposed that the best situation to acculturate into the host society is when the level of social and psychological distance is low between immigrant's culture and SL culture and when immigrant feels equal to the people of the host society.

In SL learning, the significance of exposure to the target language is supported by many researchers, Brown (2000), Schumann (1986) and this finding was reported in (Naif,2022; Naif & Noor, 2018; Mwai & Ghaffar, 2014; Hasting, 2012; Spenader, 2011; Jiang et al., 2009; Hubenthal, 2004; Oguntuyi, 1998; and Nurmi & kontiainen, 1995) studies.

7.   DISCUSSION FOR THEME 3- FSL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

All of the participants reported that they are facing difficulty in learning Finnish. The disparity between Finnish and Arabic is the main cause of difficulty for the participants in learning Finnish. Both languages belong to two different families with different writing systems. Arabic is a "central Semitic Language" Sayed, 2015:21), while Finnish belongs to Finno-Ugrian language family (Karlsson,1999; Igbarria, 2002; Peterson, 2004; White, 2006; Lehtinen, 2008; Laine, 2010; Martin, 2011). Evidently this disparity impedes the FSL learning process of the adult Arab learners and hence the acculturation process.

The impact of language disparity (in terms of grammar rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation) was confirmed by Fan (2010) and argued that language difference might cause culture shock that conducive to acculturation difficulty. Data collected from the Acculturation Index clearly confirmed the disparity between the two cultures in terms of language, religion, food, life style, social and cultural values, communication style, and family life. The participants asserted that they do not share with the Finnish people their social activities or religious occasions, e.g., Christmas, Easter or celebrate important days like the 'vappupäivä' (May 1st , Labour Day).

The Acculturation Index revealed that, practically, the participants' integration pattern was preservation, more than adaptation. Out of 14 items, only one item 'clothes' scored 1.8 that is very close to adaptation (see Appendix 2). This might be explained that the criteria adopted in the Acculturation Index, in measuring the extent of acculturation, is more accurate than a question included in the interview. Moreover, the learner participants were courteous during the interviews or they might have the intention for adaptation but practically they were not.

Acculturation Index manifested that, practically, their integration strategy is preservation (through maintaining the Arabic life style and values and rejecting the Finnish's). They cherished and maintained their Arabic life style and values, e.g., women usually dressed in Arabic traditional garb, shopping from eastern Halal shops, watching Arabic TV satellite channels, and practicing their religious Islamic rituals (fast during Ramadan and do Friday prayer). However, this in turn reduces the sense of belonging to the Finnish host society, not only for the adult immigrants as the first generation, but also for their offspring, the second generation. Moreover, it instills the sense of ethnic identity and in turn raises the level of self-identity for the immigrants.

Ahmed Hani Naif [1], and Asim Aboud Zbar[2]

8. CONCLUSION

All in all, the study revealed the perceptions of Adult FSL learners. The findings confirmed the correlation between SL learning and acculturation process and proficiency. The former leads to better results in the latter. The study disclosed a number of impediments that hinder the acculturation process for the participants and namely; anxiety factor, social distance between the adult Arab FSL learners and the host society group, FSL is difficult language by nature, and lack of social and cultural interaction between the participants and the host society members. The study also revealed the integration mood of the participants, i.e., adaptation. They cherish their native cultural background with a desire to acculturate into the host society. The success of the any acculturation process is decided by the individual differences (the extent to which immigrant is related to his native culture) and the nature of the host society (the extent to which the host society accept multicultural life).

The findings revealed the impact of the host society stereotype on immigrants' acculturation process. Therefore it is highly recommended, for future research, to investigate the correlation between the stereotype of the host society and successful immigration process.

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Ahmed Hani Naif [1], and Asim Aboud Zbar[2]

Appendix

Reported challenges and successes in FSL learning and acculturation processes
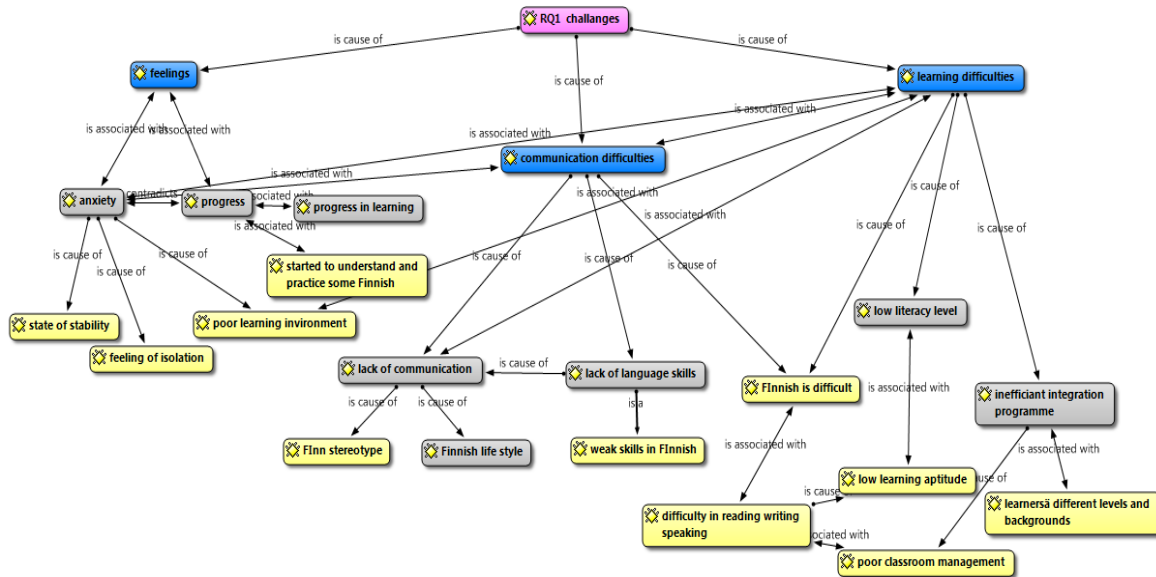
Appendix 2

Results of The Acculturation Index

Adopted from Ward, C., and Rana-Deuba, R. (1999)

1= preservation, 2=adaptation, 3=assimilation

Participants	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Average
Acculturation Category										
1.Clothes	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	1.8
2.Life style	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1.4
3.Food	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4.Religion/beliefs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5.Family life	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.1
6.Social values	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.1
7.Self-identity	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.1
8.Recreational activities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.1
9.Cultural activities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.1
10.Language used at home, Finnish/Arabic	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11.Social communication style	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1.3
12.Follow-up media, Arabic/Finnish	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1.2
13.Interaction	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.1
14.Employment activities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Average	1.1	1.1	1,1	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.8	1.2	1.2