

Cultural Adaptation of Foreign Students: Case Study of Iranian Students in Vienna

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Abstract:

The pivotal role of language and culture in intercultural communication and its roots in applied linguistics (Kramersch 2014), motivated me to conduct transdisciplinary study on the challenges faced by Iranian students in Austrian society. In the Austrian context, integration plays a crucial role in the country's immigration policy. Consequently, language and culture serve as instruments of power. Furthermore, Iranian students' different ethnic backgrounds and mother tongues motivated me to investigate how these differences may influence their adaptation process within Austrian society. Employing a Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006) allowed me to explore the primary challenges, the influential factors on the challenges, consequences of their faced challenges, and some strategies to overcome the challenges. To conduct this study, I collected data from focus groups with Iranian and Austrian students and individual interviews with students and experts.

Moreover, considering the critical nature of the challenges and different aspects of power relations, as well as discussing ideological and identity issues, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Reisigl & Wodak 2001) to support my analyses.

I intend to present the conclusive findings of my research at this conference. I will focus on how students' attitudes to cultural differences develop aspects of their sociocultural identities. Furthermore, the study's findings demonstrate that the significant influence of academic culture on the varied experiences of students across diverse educational environments. This academic culture is evident across multiple levels, including academic degrees, disciplines, and institutions. In this conference, I will discuss culture from two perspectives: the traditional concept of culture and the small culture, specifically academic culture in this study.

Keywords: Constructivist Grounded Theory, attitude to cultural differences, developing identity, academic culture.

