



Indian Immigrant Students in Canada: Interpersonal Communication and Cross- Cultural Issues

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Abstract

The increasing mobility of Indian students to Canada has created new opportunities for educational and professional development while also exposing students to unfamiliar linguistic, cultural, and interpersonal practices. This study examines the interpersonal communication and cross-cultural issues and challenges experienced by Indian immigrant students in Canada. It particularly focuses on the ways in which differences in language use, pronunciation, accent, conversational styles, cultural norms, social practices, and pragmatic knowledge may influence interpersonal interaction. The study adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach based on observations from an international conference on interpersonal communicative challenges for Indian immigrant students in Canada, supported by relevant secondary sources, including: journal articles, and academic publications. The findings indicate that interpersonal communication difficulties extend beyond grammatical or linguistic competence and may also arise from differences in pragmatic and sociocultural expectations. Differences in conversational openings, greetings, politeness, speech patterns, pronunciation, accent, speech rate, and culturally influenced social behaviour may contribute to misunderstanding and communication difficulties. The study further highlights the use of communication strategies such as requesting repetition, clarification, topic avoidance, and preference for face-to-face interaction when students encounter communicative difficulties. It argues that effective adjustment requires not only English-language proficiency but also pragmatic awareness, cultural understanding, and strategic competence. The study recommends greater attention to cross-cultural and interpersonal communication in orientation and language-support programmes for international students. Developing awareness of culturally situated communication practices can help Indian students participate more effectively in academic, professional, and social interactions in Canada.

Keywords: Indian immigrant students, interpersonal communication, cross-cultural communication, pragmatic competence, cultural adaptation and communication strategies.

1. Introduction

Canadian immigration and education policies have increasingly promoted the expansion of international student enrolment, as students with Canadian educational qualifications, local work experience, and proficiency in English or French are considered an important potential source of skilled labour and future permanent residents (Arthur, 2017). The number of international students in Canada increased substantially in recent years. In 2022, approximately 807,750 international students across all levels of study held valid study permits, representing a 31% increase from around 617,000 in 2021 (ICEF Monitor, 2023). Between 2000 and 2022, the international student population increased by more than 400%. Despite this overall growth, the international student population has become less geographically diverse, with more than half of all students originating from just two countries, India and China. India constituted the largest source of international students in 2022, accounting for approximately 40% of Canada's total international student population (ICEF Monitor, 2023).

Although universities accounted for the majority of international student enrolments in higher education, with 60.5% of students enrolled in 2019/2020, colleges have increasingly become an important destination for international students, accounting for 39.5% of enrolments during the same period (Statistics Canada, 2021). International enrolment in Canadian colleges has grown considerably faster than in universities. Between 2014 and 2018, study permit applications from international students intending to study at Canadian colleges increased by 319% (Colleges and Institutes Canada, 2021). This growth was particularly evident in Ontario and British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Ontario has been the only Canadian province where international student enrolment in colleges has exceeded that in universities since the 2018/2019 academic year. By 2020/2021, approximately 52% of Ontario's international students were enrolled in colleges (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

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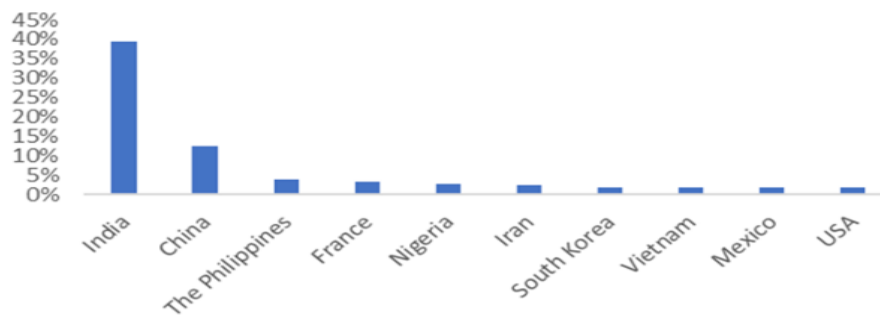


Figure 7.1 Top ten source countries for international students in Canada, 2022.

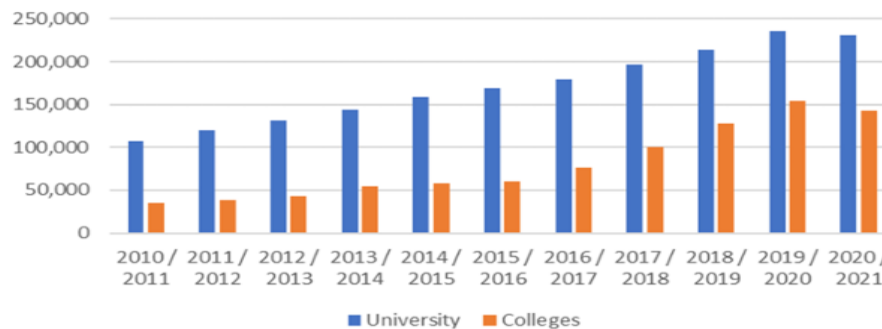


Figure 7.2 International students by type of institution in Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada. (2022). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710001801>

International student enrolment in Canadian universities and colleges increased considerably between 2010/2011 and 2020/2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022, as cited in (Akbar, 2024).

The increasing movement of students across national and cultural boundaries has made higher education an important site of intercultural interaction. Students studying in a foreign country encounter not only a new academic environment but also unfamiliar linguistic practices, cultural expectations, social conventions, and patterns of interpersonal communication. Consequently, effective communication requires more than grammatical or linguistic proficiency; it also involves understanding how language is used appropriately within particular social and cultural contexts.

Canada, with its multicultural and multilingual environment, provides an important context for examining such cross-cultural encounters. Indian students constitute a significant group within Canada's international student population and often interact with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their transition from the Indian to the Canadian sociocultural environment may expose them to communication practices that differ from those familiar to them. Differences in politeness, forms of address, turn-taking, directness and indirectness, accent, pronunciation, speech rate, and conversational conventions may influence their interpersonal interactions.

1.2 Context of Indian Student Mobility to Canada

Canada has emerged as an important destination for international students because of its educational, social, and economic opportunities. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE, 2008), the three major reasons for choosing Canada were the quality of its education system (82%), its reputation as a welcoming and non-discriminatory society (79%), and its reputation as a safe country (78%). These factors have contributed to Canada's attractiveness as a destination for students seeking educational opportunities abroad.

The increasing movement of Indian students to Canada is also associated with changing educational and employment conditions in India. Reuters (2022) reported that growing numbers of Indian students were

choosing countries such as Canada and Australia for short-term courses and higher education, partly because of changing employment prospects and the value attached to international qualifications. Rising costs of private education and limited employment opportunities in some sectors have further encouraged families to consider overseas education. Educational consultancies have also facilitated this mobility by providing services related to English-language testing, course selection, visa applications, travel arrangements, and part-time employment opportunities (Reuters, 2022).

The growing importance of India in Canada's migration landscape is reflected in both immigration and international education. IANS (2022), as reported by *Business Standard*, noted that nearly 100,000 Indians became permanent residents of Canada in 2021, when Canada admitted a record 405,000 new immigrants. During the same period, Canada had more than 622,000 international students, of whom approximately 217,410 were from India. These figures demonstrate the substantial role of Indians in Canada's international student and immigrant population.

1.3 Student Mobility and Internationalization of Education

Student mobility has developed from an activity primarily associated with language learning and cultural immersion into an established component of the internationalization of higher education. Ghosh (2022) traces its development through earlier institutional initiatives in Europe and the United States, where students increasingly moved across national boundaries for educational and language-learning purposes. The expansion of globalization, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and neoliberal developments in higher education further contributed to international student mobility through the growth of international programmes and educational institutions.

Canada's position within this global mobility has been strengthened by its educational and socioeconomic environment. Ghosh (2022) notes that Canada became increasingly attractive to international students during periods of global economic uncertainty and changing attitudes towards immigration in other Western countries. The availability of educational opportunities, employment prospects, and post-graduation work possibilities has contributed to Canada's position as a major destination for international students.

International student mobility produces benefits at both institutional and individual levels. At the institutional and national levels, international students contribute to universities and the wider economy while enriching educational environments through diverse languages, cultures, ethnicities, social backgrounds, and perspectives. Student mobility also contributes to research, innovation, international relations, and cultural exchange. At the individual level, studying abroad can promote intellectual and professional development, resilience, independent thinking, and exposure to different perspectives. It can also encourage students to develop a greater understanding of their own cultural identities and increase opportunities for cross-cultural interaction in multicultural environments (Ghosh, 2022).

For Indian students, however, educational mobility also involves adjustment to a new sociocultural environment. Students entering Canadian educational institutions interact with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and may encounter social expectations and communicative practices that differ from those familiar to them in India. Their transition therefore involves not only academic and professional adjustment but also adaptation to a different cultural and interpersonal environment.

The attractiveness of Canada for Indian students was further influenced by changes in international migration patterns. In 2018, restrictions during the Trump administration contributed to a decline in US immigration, while Canada became an increasingly important destination for both prospective permanent residents and international students. Canada and Australia offered post-graduation work opportunities,

while the United Kingdom subsequently reintroduced similar provisions. These developments, together with educational and employment opportunities, contributed to the substantial increase in Indian student mobility to Canada, particularly by 2021.

The growing presence of Indian students in Canada provides an important context for examining their experiences beyond education and employment. Their movement between Indian and Canadian sociocultural environments may require them to negotiate differences in language use, cultural expectations, social practices, and interpersonal communication. Consequently, Indian students constitute an important population for examining how cross-cultural differences may influence interpersonal communication and adaptation within Canadian society.

2. Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication (IPC) refers to the process through which individuals exchange information, ideas, feelings, and meanings during interaction with one another. It is a fundamental aspect of human social life because individuals use communication not only to exchange information but also to establish relationships, express emotions, negotiate meanings, and fulfil social and interpersonal needs. Madhukar (2010) describes interpersonal communication as communication that takes place between two or more individuals at a personal level, while Gamble (2013) emphasizes that it involves the deliberate or unintended transfer of meaning between individuals. Thus, interpersonal communication extends beyond the simple transmission of messages and involves the creation and interpretation of meaning within interaction.

Interpersonal communication is a dynamic and reciprocal process. Participants are simultaneously involved in sending, receiving, interpreting, and responding to messages. Communication is therefore influenced by the perceptions, experiences, expectations, and communicative abilities of the individuals involved. Schutz (1966) emphasizes the interpersonal needs of inclusion, affection, and control, suggesting that communication plays an important role in helping individuals develop and maintain social relationships. Through interpersonal interaction, individuals seek recognition, acceptance, belonging, and meaningful relationships with others.

Another important characteristic of interpersonal communication is that it involves both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Verbal communication includes spoken or written language, whereas non-verbal communication involves facial expressions, gestures, body language, eye contact, physical distance, tone, and other behavioural cues. These elements frequently operate together in interpersonal encounters and contribute to how messages are understood. Consequently, the meaning of a message may depend not only on the words used but also on the manner in which they are expressed and interpreted.

Interpersonal communication is also shaped by the social context in which interaction occurs. The relationship between participants, their respective roles, the purpose of communication, and the situation can influence how individuals communicate with one another. The language used between friends, for example, may differ considerably from communication between a student and a teacher or between an employee and an employer. Similarly, individuals may modify their communicative behaviour according to the degree of familiarity, formality, intimacy, or authority involved in an interaction.

Effective interpersonal communication therefore requires more than linguistic knowledge. Individuals need to listen, interpret messages, respond appropriately, and recognize the expectations associated with particular social situations. Miscommunication may occur when participants interpret a message differently from what the speaker intended or when expectations concerning appropriate interaction are not shared. Such misunderstandings can affect interpersonal relationships and may lead to hesitation, conflict, discomfort, or social distance.

For students living and studying in a new environment, interpersonal communication becomes particularly important because much of their academic and social experience depends upon interaction

with other people. Students communicate with teachers, classmates, friends, employers, and members of the wider community on a regular basis. Their ability to participate effectively in these interactions can influence their academic engagement, social relationships, sense of belonging, and overall adjustment.

Interpersonal communication is therefore an important dimension of students' experiences in a foreign educational and social environment. Understanding IPC provides a foundation for examining how individuals communicate, establish relationships, interpret messages, and respond to different communicative situations. In the context of Indian students in Canada, this perspective provides the basis for examining the specific cross-cultural challenges that may arise when interpersonal communication takes place across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

2.1 Cross-cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication can be complex due to differences in language, values, norms and expectations between individuals or groups from different cultures (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Ting-Toomey, Stella; Dorjee, 2019). These differences include one of the most important barriers between cultures, not only language but the differences in values and norms of the place, academic culture, and even stereotypes and prejudices of the local residents towards a person's inherent culture. Due to these distinctions, disagreements over cultural norms and beliefs can produce conflict or miscommunication.

According to data gathered by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), the number of internationally mobile students worldwide has grown dramatically over the past 20 years. In fact, the number increased slightly from 6.38 million to 6.39 million during 2020 and 2021, even at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated mobility restrictions. Most of the world's internationally mobile students come from Asian countries. China had the largest number in 2021, with more than 1 million, doubling that of India, ranking second with approximately 508,000. Although the numbers were lower than those of the top two origin countries, Vietnam, Germany, and Uzbekistan were also significant contributors, each with about 100,000 students. With nearly 833,000 international students, the US remains the world's largest destination country, followed by the United Kingdom (nearly 601,000), Australia (about 378,000), Germany (over 376,000), and Canada (almost 318,000) (UN Migration, 2024).

Students are expected to adapt not only to the local culture but also to overcome culture shock. International students often face diverse experiences and challenges when adjusting to a new academic setting. Furthermore, mental, emotional, and academic well-being can be negatively impacted by challenges such as prejudice and cultural isolation (Arday, 2018).

Therefore, it involves not merely exchanging information but also negotiating meanings, identities, relationships, and culturally appropriate ways of interacting. Communication practices that are considered appropriate in one cultural context may be interpreted differently in another. For Indian students, differences in cultural expectations, social hierarchy, interpersonal distance, and communication styles may sometimes result in misunderstanding, hesitation, or difficulties in establishing effective relationships. Such challenges should not necessarily be viewed as deficiencies in English proficiency but as part of the complex relationship between language, culture, and communication.

From a discourse perspective, examining interpersonal interactions can provide insight into how individuals manage communication and respond to culturally different expectations. Features such as turn-taking, politeness, requests, disagreement, forms of address, and direct or indirect expressions can reveal important dimensions of cross-cultural communication. The present study therefore examines the cross-cultural issues experienced by Indian immigrant students in Canada in relation to their interpersonal communication. It seeks to understand how differences in linguistic practices and cultural norms shape their everyday communicative experiences and relationships.

By bringing together cross-cultural communication and interpersonal discourse, the study contributes to a broader understanding of the communicative challenges faced by Indian students in Canada. It also highlights the importance of intercultural communicative competence in facilitating students' academic, social, and professional integration within the Canadian context.

2.2 Interpersonal Communication and Cross-Cultural Issues in Canada

Interpersonal communication does not take place in a cultural vacuum. The ways individuals initiate conversations, express opinions, show respect, maintain relationships, interpret silence, use gestures, and respond to others are influenced by the cultural and social contexts in which they have been raised. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact, their expectations about appropriate communication may not always coincide. Cross-cultural communication therefore involves more than the use of a common language; it also requires individuals to understand and negotiate differences in culturally influenced patterns of interaction (Samovar et al., 2010; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

For Indian students studying and living in Canada, such differences can become an important part of their everyday interpersonal experiences. Although many Indian students have previous experience with English, familiarity with the language does not necessarily mean familiarity with Canadian communicative conventions. Students may encounter differences in the ways people initiate and end conversations, address others, express disagreement, make requests, participate in classroom discussions, or establish interpersonal relationships. Such differences may create uncertainty because communicative behaviour considered appropriate or respectful in one cultural context may be interpreted differently in another (Gudykunst, 2004).

Cultural orientations can also influence interpersonal relationships. Indian social practices are commonly associated with collectivist orientations that emphasize family relationships, social obligations, group affiliation, respect for elders and authority, and interdependence. Canadian society, although culturally diverse, is often characterized by relatively individualistic orientations emphasizing personal autonomy, independence, individual choice, and self-expression (Triandis & Su, 1995). These contrasting orientations may influence expectations concerning teacher–student relationships, peer interaction, decision-making, self-expression, and social participation. However, such distinctions should be understood as broad cultural tendencies rather than fixed characteristics of all Indian or Canadian individuals.

Therefore, the cross-cultural issues encountered by Indian immigrant students in Canada are multi-dimensional. These are accent and speech rate, pragmatic knowledge, direct and indirect communication, turn-taking, politeness conventions, forms of address, hierarchical relationships, communication in the workplace, non-verbal behavior and personal space. Such linguistic and sociocultural differences may be aggravated by the culture shock, anxiety, stereotypes and the tension between the culturally shaped individualist and collectivist orientations. The argument is that successful interpersonal communication is more than just competence in the English language. Students also require pragmatic awareness and knowledge of the social and cultural conventions that regulate communication in the host environment (Novera, 2004; Kavanaugh, 2006; Campbell & Li, 2008; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Le Gross, 2009)

One important area of cross-cultural variation concerns directness and indirectness in communication. Students may have different expectations about how disagreement, requests, criticism, or refusal should be expressed. For instance, a student may use an indirect expression such as *“Perhaps we could consider another possibility”* to indicate disagreement, whereas an interlocutor may expect a more explicit expression of an alternative view. Such differences can result in uncertainty about the speaker's intended meaning. The issue, therefore, is not necessarily a lack of grammatical competence but a difference in the pragmatic interpretation of communicative intentions. Pragmatic competence enables speakers to

select and interpret language appropriately according to the social relationship, situation, and communicative purpose.

Forms of address and perceptions of social hierarchy may constitute another area of adjustment. Indian students may have educational experiences in which terms such as *Sir*, *Madam*, or *Professor* are commonly used to express respect towards teachers and senior persons. In a Canadian university environment, however, an instructor may introduce themselves by their first name and expect students to use it. An Indian student may initially perceive first-name address as overly informal, while the Canadian interlocutor may regard the continued use of formal titles as unnecessarily distant. Such differences illustrate how interpersonal meaning is shaped by culturally influenced expectations concerning status, familiarity, and social distance.

Differences may also become apparent in classroom interaction. Students who have previously studied in relatively teacher-centred environments may initially be less inclined to interrupt a teacher, openly disagree with an instructor, or volunteer opinions during classroom discussions. In contrast, some Canadian educational settings place considerable emphasis on discussion, questioning, independent expression, and active participation. Consequently, silence should not automatically be interpreted as a lack of knowledge or interest. It may instead reflect a student's culturally shaped expectations concerning appropriate classroom behaviour. For international students, adapting to these expectations may require both linguistic confidence and an understanding of the interactional norms of the new academic environment.

Politeness and conversational routines provide another important dimension of cross-cultural interpersonal communication. Expressions such as “*sorry*,” “*excuse me*,” “*pardon*,” and “*please*” may perform different pragmatic functions depending on the context. For example, “*Sorry, could I get past you?*” may function primarily as a routine politeness expression rather than an apology for serious wrongdoing. Similarly, expressions such as “*How's it going?*” may function as conversational openings rather than invitations to provide a detailed account of one's personal circumstances. International students who initially interpret such expressions according to their literal meanings may experience uncertainty about the intended interpersonal meaning. This demonstrates the importance of understanding language as situated social practice rather than simply as a system of grammatical forms.

Accent, pronunciation, and speech rate may also influence interpersonal communication. Indian students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and may use different varieties of Indian English, while their Canadian interlocutors may use Canadian English or other varieties of English. Initial unfamiliarity with pronunciation patterns, rhythm, reduced forms, or rapid conversational speech can occasionally affect comprehension. Similarly, Canadian interlocutors may require some familiarity with Indian English accents and speech patterns. Such differences should not be understood in terms of one variety being superior to another. Instead, they demonstrate the importance of intelligibility, listener familiarity, and mutual accommodation in multilingual and multicultural communication.

Cross-cultural differences can further occur in non-verbal communication, including eye contact, personal space, gestures, facial expressions, and body posture. Behaviour that is considered appropriate in one cultural context may be interpreted differently in another. For example, differences in preferred interpersonal distance may make one participant feel that the other is standing either too close or too far away. Similarly, expectations concerning eye contact can vary according to social and cultural contexts. Such differences can influence interpersonal impressions even when the verbal communication itself is grammatically accurate.

Small talk and phatic communication represent another potential area of difficulty. Expressions such as *"How are you?"*, *"How's your day going?"*, or comments about the weather may serve primarily to establish or maintain social contact rather than to request detailed information. An international student who interprets these expressions as genuine information-seeking questions may provide a more detailed response than the situation requires. Understanding such conversational conventions can therefore help students participate more naturally in informal interpersonal interactions.

These differences can become particularly significant in workplace communication, where students may interact with supervisors, colleagues, customers, and other employees. Appropriate ways of making requests, expressing disagreement, asking for assistance, or addressing senior colleagues may vary across cultural and institutional contexts. For example, the choice between *"Can I...?"*, *"Could I...?"*, and *"Would it be possible...?"* may involve not only grammatical variation but also differences in perceived politeness, formality, and interpersonal distance. Developing awareness of such distinctions can help international students negotiate workplace relationships more effectively.

Importantly, cross-cultural communication challenges should not be interpreted as fixed characteristics of either Indian or Canadian culture. India and Canada are both internally diverse societies, and individuals may differ considerably according to region, language, class, education, age, professional background, and personal experience. Therefore, the purpose of identifying cultural differences is not to establish rigid categories of "Indian" and "Canadian" communication. Rather, it is to examine how individuals negotiate different expectations when they encounter unfamiliar communicative practices.

The challenges experienced by Indian students may also be connected with broader processes of cultural adjustment. Difficulties in understanding unfamiliar accents, interpreting culturally specific expressions, participating in unfamiliar social situations, or establishing relationships with members of the host community may contribute to hesitation, anxiety, or reduced confidence. Research on international students in Canada has consequently emphasized the relationship between intercultural communication competence and students' psychological and social adjustment. Developing cultural empathy, behavioural flexibility, communication effectiveness, and appropriateness can assist students in negotiating interpersonal relationships in the host environment.

Overall, cross-cultural issues in Canada demonstrate that effective interpersonal communication involves considerably more than grammatical or lexical competence. It requires the ability to interpret meanings in context, recognize culturally influenced expectations, adapt communicative strategies, and negotiate meaning with interlocutors from different backgrounds. For Indian immigrant students, developing such pragmatic and intercultural awareness may facilitate their participation in academic, social, and professional environments. Thus, interpersonal communication should be understood as a dynamic process in which linguistic resources, cultural expectations, social relationships, and individual strategies interact to construct meaning.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the cross-cultural issues and interpersonal communication challenges experienced by Indian immigrant students in Canada. A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, and interpretations within their social and cultural contexts. The study is exploratory in nature and draws on observations and information obtained from an online international conference specifically concerned with interpersonal communication challenges among Indian immigrant students in Canada. The study also uses relevant secondary sources, including books, journal articles, online academic

resources, and other scholarly materials, to develop a broader understanding of interpersonal communication and cross-cultural issues.

3.2 Data Sources and Collection

The study draws upon both primary and secondary sources. The primary material was obtained through the researcher's observation of a two-day online international conference held on March 28 and 29, which focused on *“Interpersonal Communicative Challenges for Indian Immigrant Students in Canada.”* The researcher attended the conference as an active and intentional observer and listened to presentations and discussions by the participating speakers. The conference provided information and observations concerning interpersonal communication, cultural differences, language use, and the issues encountered by Indian immigrant students in Canada.

The conference was organized by the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), in collaboration with the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, New Delhi, under the SCLS Grant 2021–22. The researcher participated in the conference as part of an academic assignment during the M.A. in English Language Teaching programme and received a certificate of participation. The observations and information obtained from the conference constitute the primary basis for identifying the major communication and cross-cultural issues discussed in the study.

The study also incorporates secondary sources, including textbooks, research articles, journals, academic publications, and relevant online resources. These sources were consulted to provide theoretical and contextual support for the interpretation of interpersonal communication and cross-cultural challenges.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What kinds of interpersonal communication & cross-cultural issues faced by Indian immigrant students in in Canada?
2. What are the major linguistic and sociocultural factors that influence the interpersonal communication experiences of Indian immigrant students in Canada?

Objectives of the Study

The study aims:

1. To identify the prominent interpersonal communication and Cross- Cultural issues experienced by Indian immigrant students in Canada.
2. To explore the linguistic and sociocultural factors that may contribute to communication difficulties in the Canadian context.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected material was analysed qualitatively through thematic interpretation. Information obtained from the conference observations and relevant secondary sources was organized around recurring themes related to interpersonal communication and cross-cultural interaction. Particular attention was given to issues such as communication styles, cultural norms, social practices, language use, pronunciation,

classroom interaction, politeness, interpersonal behaviour, and cultural adaptation. The analysis seeks to identify how these factors may influence the communication experiences of Indian immigrant students in Canada. The study does not attempt to statistically generalize its findings. Rather, it provides an interpretive account of the communication issues identified through the available observational and documentary material.

3. Conclusion

The present study examined the interpersonal communication challenges experienced by Indian immigrant students in Canada, with particular attention to linguistic differences, cultural norms, and social practices. The findings suggest that communication difficulties cannot be attributed solely to a lack of English proficiency. Rather, they emerge from the interaction of linguistic, pragmatic, cultural, and contextual factors. Differences in pronunciation, accent, speech rate, language use, conversational style, and culturally influenced patterns of interaction may create difficulties in understanding and negotiating meaning during interpersonal communication.

The study also indicates that differences between Indian and Canadian communicative practices may contribute to interpersonal misunderstandings. Variations in conversational openings, greetings, expressions of politeness, and approaches to social interaction illustrate how communication is influenced by culturally established norms. Such differences may create uncertainty for students who are familiar with one set of communicative expectations but encounter another in the Canadian context. Consequently, effective interpersonal communication requires students to develop not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic and cultural awareness.

The findings further suggest that Indian students may employ various communication strategies when they encounter difficulties, including asking for repetition, avoiding certain topics, and preferring face-to-face interaction. These strategies indicate that students actively attempt to negotiate meaning when their linguistic, cultural, contextual, or topical knowledge is insufficient for effective interaction. Developing greater awareness of the communicative conventions of the host environment may therefore help students manage such situations more effectively.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of viewing interpersonal communication as a culturally situated process. Indian students entering Canada negotiate not only a new educational and social environment but also different expectations concerning language use and interpersonal behaviour. Greater awareness of linguistic variation, pragmatic conventions, and cultural practices can help reduce ambiguity and facilitate more effective interpersonal relationships. The study consequently emphasizes that successful communication in a multicultural environment requires flexibility, cultural awareness, and the ability to adapt communication strategies according to the context.

4.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed above, several recommendations can be made to support Indian students in managing interpersonal communication in the Canadian context.

First, students should develop pragmatic and cultural awareness alongside English-language proficiency. Learning vocabulary and grammar alone may not be sufficient for effective interpersonal communication. Students should become familiar with how language is used in particular social situations, including greetings, requests, politeness, conversational openings and closings, and interactions with teachers, colleagues, and members of the wider community.

Second, students should be encouraged to develop communication strategies for dealing with misunderstanding. Strategies such as asking for repetition or clarification, requesting the speaker to slow down, confirming information, and appropriately reformulating a message can help students negotiate meaning when differences in accent, pronunciation, speech rate, or language use create difficulties.

Rather than avoiding communication altogether, students can use these strategies to maintain interaction and increase their confidence.

Third, greater attention should be given to differences in pronunciation, accent, and speech rate. Students may encounter unfamiliar varieties of English in Canada, while Canadian interlocutors may also encounter Indian English. Exposure to different varieties of English through authentic conversations, listening activities, and interaction with speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds can improve students' comprehension and adaptability. At the same time, communication difficulties should not be viewed simply as deficiencies in Indian English; intelligibility and mutual accommodation should be considered important dimensions of successful communication.

Fourth, students should develop awareness of culturally influenced conversational practices. Differences in greetings, pleasantries, directness, politeness, and the organization of conversations may create misunderstandings. Students can benefit from understanding that communicative practices are culturally variable and that a particular way of initiating or managing a conversation may not carry the same interpersonal meaning in another cultural context.

Fifth, educational institutions should provide orientation programmes on cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. Such programmes could introduce international students to common academic and social communication practices in Canada before or during their initial period of study. Activities involving role-play, simulated conversations, group discussions, and authentic interaction could help students practise communication in situations they are likely to encounter in their academic, professional, and social lives.

Finally, students can benefit from applying the principles associated with Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly the Maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner (Grice, 1975). In practical terms, students should provide information that is truthful and adequately supported (Quality), avoid giving unnecessary information while providing sufficient information for the situation (Quantity), remain relevant to the topic (Relation), and express themselves clearly and avoid unnecessary ambiguity (Manner). These principles can serve as useful guidelines for managing interpersonal interactions, although their application should remain sensitive to cultural and contextual differences.

Taken together, these recommendations suggest that effective interpersonal communication should be approached as a process of linguistic competence, pragmatic awareness, cultural understanding, and strategic adaptation. Supporting Indian students in developing these areas may help them participate more confidently in academic, professional, and social interactions in Canada.

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