ROLE OF LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

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Abstract: The USA is the country with the biggest recorded immigration flow in the world. Every year thousands of people border the country and knowledge of English language becomes crucial factor and the biggest facilitator in immigrants’ integration into society. Proficiency in English as a Second Language was rated number one problem in succeeding good career. When immigrants practice their communication skills, they often experience anxiety and self-awareness that they speak a non-native language. The manifestation of this kind of anxiety varies from individual to individual and it can cause more language mistakes which would cause even more anxiety. Given that immigrant have to use the second language in all spheres of social life and at work, we assume that they are constantly staying in an emotionally tense environment. We hypothesize that language anxiety is one of the important aspects of immigrant life which may cause health problems of non-native population. For example, the generalized hypothesis that immigrants are healthier than native population was tested on the example of the Community Tracking Study Health Survey. According to the report, the US citizens without language barriers were less likely to report poor health condition. The immigrants used to undergo health problems during their first 10 years of living in the USA. Therefore, the combined effect of stress and language barrier can lead to poorer health in immigrant communities. The study held in Australia between 1993 and 1998 has reported that the rate of admission of people from non-English speaking background with heart disease was significantly higher compared to controls, namely 1.23 to 1.89 for cardiac catheterization, 0.23 to 0.27 for percutaneous transluminal angioplasty and 1.04 to 1.80 for coronary artery grafting. Other countries in Europe and English-speaking countries like New Zealand and Canada, also report the facts that immigrant population has more significant disease rate than native population and link this fact to the language barrier and stress and anxiety related to it. Conclusion: The level of proficiency in the language of a non-native country can cause many disturbances on the individual and social level. Constant living in the condition of stress and anxiety may cause poor health condition of the non-native community. Immigrants may also confront cultural shock which may enhance stress and anxiety related to language. Therefore, foreign language competence may determine public health condition of large immigrant communities.

Acknowledgements: Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Training in Biological and Mathematical Sciences (DMS-0531927); Mississippi NSF-EPSCoR "Innovations through Computational Sciences" Award (EPS-0556308); and the Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) - Center for Environmental Health (NIH-NCRR Grant G12RR13459-09).