

論文

Library Service for Immigrants in America

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1.Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the library service to immigrants in America. More specifically, the primary objective is to examine the English language service, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in New York Public Library. By researching about the role of library, it is intended to clarify the needs and demands of language education service in library for immigrants in an age of globalization.

English language service such as ESOL program in libraries is usually free and open access to all people. These programs are widely held at libraries towards the immigrants, and the program reflects the needs of immigrants to learn English. Providing immigrants with information has become one of the important roles of library. The information assists immigrants to obtain the power to make decision on their lives. Many libraries in America promote services that encourage immigrants to acquire citizenship and participate in society. English language service such as ESOL program is important for immigrants not only to learn the language but to access information and to learn about American society.

Although the number of English language service in cultural institutions such as the library in America is increasing, these educational services such as language education program in libraries are not yet common in Japan. Thus, I believe that understanding the library services for immigrants in America will contribute to design language education services in Japanese libraries and educational institutions.

2.Literature Review

Libraries have offered various services to citizens including immigrants. In this section, I will introduce the literature that defines the role of library in America.

There are many discussions about the role of library. Some detailed examples are literature by Stephen E. Weil (2004), David Carr (2010), Stephen Stern (1991), Nancy Kranich (2005) and Diantha Schull (2004). Carr focuses on the ideal function of cultural institutions. Stern examines the role of ethnic libraries which serve immigrants while Kranich and Schull emphasize the recent role of libraries which tries to meet not only immigrants' needs but also the needs of diverse American communities.

A library is categorized as a cultural institution in America. Cultural institution is defined by three essential functions: to preserve, to study, and to communicate (Note 1). David Carr (2003) mentions the ideal vision for the function of cultural institutions: "Our libraries and museums should be intentionally committed, dedicated by mission and service, to the construction of thinking lives, and to the illumination of thoughtful possibilities for those lives" (Note 2). This vision is significant because a library undertakes the responsibility to assist citizens to design plans which can improve lives.

In the article, Carr suggests that the more important issue about English literacy is not knowing how to read, but not knowing how to connect to society and engage in cultural practices. In other words, the term 'illiteracy' does not only include

those who cannot read but also those who do not have a method to obtain information to fully participate in society (Note 3). Therefore, cultural institutions such as a library should function as a place where citizens can acquire skills to receive necessary information.

According to Stern, as society has faced many changes, the role of library and service also has changed to fit the needs of citizens. The author divides the service for immigrants into four distinct periods: service for foreign born in the early 20th century when immigrants increased, service promoting intercultural understanding after World War II, service to the disadvantage after the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and service to the ethnic enfranchised in the 1980s. In the 1960s, minority services in libraries were reexamined so that it can meet the needs of diverse ethnic groups. Stern states that the library service model that was produced in the 1960s has become a model of present library services (Note 4). He notes that ethnic library has intended to offer the services that can link immigrants to the community. Therefore, survey was taken for the first time to research the needs of the ethnic groups.

Stern argues that by making use of library services for immigrants, ethnic minorities will be able to have greater control over the information and improve the standard of living in the United States. Offering education program to minorities is a way to provide immigrants power to change their lives. Additionally, the importance of civic engagement is stressed among other research articles. The following literature attempts to demonstrate the library's role in civic engagement.

Researchers such as Kranich and Schull state that the role of library is to promote civic engagement. The library has offered innovative programs to bring people who have similar concerns in the communities together. Kranich states that "librarians

also help citizens learn how to identify, evaluate, and use information essential for making decisions about the way they live, work, learn and govern" (Note 5). This article stresses that one of the important roles of library is to be involved in civic engagement.

Schull suggests that libraries are designed for people to come to interact with others. She also emphasizes how a number of library's mission statements have repeatedly used the phrase, 'encourage civic participation.' This indicates that the role of libraries in the 21st century is to act as a community center which fosters civic engagement to support immigrants in the community.

Thus, libraries have played a crucial role of helping the individual participate in society. The libraries have constantly looked for services that can provide innovative programs to satisfy citizens' needs and demands. The immigrant services for the diverse communities in a library will be discussed in the following section.

3. Diverse Library Services

The presence of diverse communities is one of the characteristics of American society. The libraries have the mission to provide special services to minorities. Especially after 1960s, offering services for various interests of diverse communities became essential.

The libraries have the difficult task to offer services that respect different cultural values and identity. Offering special services for minorities and encouraging people to interact with different cultures in the community are not an easy task. Lisa K. Hussey (2009) articulates that libraries in America are responsible to fulfill the needs of people with different backgrounds. As Hussey states, many critics after the civil rights movement discuss "the need for diversity in all aspects of social life, especially with regard to public institutions such as libraries. A commonly stated goal for diversity is for

these institutions to reflect the wider population to better serve their constituents” (Note 6). So this fact illustrates the difficulties for library to serve diverse communities equally. It is emphasized that the library should have a mission to satisfy the needs of both the majority and the minority.

These ideas have been carried on to the present public library services and are often portrayed in the library’s mission statements. Each library has its own mission and by exploring the mission statement, it is possible to understand what each library emphasizes when providing services to the community. In order to understand the library service in depth, the next section will focus on how library has supported the diverse communities in New York City by providing an example of New York Public Library’s mission statement.

4. New York Public Library’s Mission Statement

The purpose of this section is to indicate the library’s mission statement and how the library has worked to meet the needs of the community in the case of New York Public Library. The mission of New York Public Library is: to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen the community (Note 7). The following is the full mission statement of New York Public Library.

1. We inspire lifelong learning by creating more able learners and researchers. We:

- Teach learning and information-navigation skills
- Provide tools, resources, and great places to work
- Engage in great exploratory conversations
- Ask and answer questions that encourage patrons to challenge their assumptions
- Support creativity, research, and problem-solving
- Bring people together to spark creative synergies and learn from each other

2. We advance knowledge by providing free and open access to materials and information that reflect New York’s global perspective. We:

- Identify, acquire, and preserve items that enhance our unique areas of expertise
- Connect with other organizations whose materials complement our own
- Inspire interest, expand horizons, and enrich perspectives
- Build tools that allow us to connect with the world in our areas of expertise

3. We strengthen our communities by promoting full citizenship and participation in society. We:

- Promote the development of key skills and capabilities
- Provide dynamic resources to help patrons understand and engage in society
- Create safe and reliable places where we and our patrons can enjoy, honor, celebrate, and engage with our communities
- Offer unique and authoritative materials of historical importance
- Bring our diverse communities together

This mission is connected to the intention of New York Public Library’s service and how the library has initiated educational services and programs to meet the needs of people with different backgrounds. The library has become the place where English classes are held for the diverse communities. The intent of ESOL class fits the mission of New York Public Library. By learning English, people with different backgrounds can communicate and engage in society more actively. The following section will show the characteristics of libraries and how the multicultural demographics of New York City has influenced the library services.

5. Demographics and its Influence to Library Service

The characteristics of library have a close relation to the demographics of the community. The demographics of community influence the structure of library service.

Carr describes the characteristics of cultural institutions which include libraries as: 1. the presence of a collection, 2. a systematic, continuous, organized knowledge structure; and, 3. scholarship, information and thought (Note 8). Others such as Stern (1991) list that library should serve as: "1. cultural center, 2. an educational agency, 3. a preserver of culture and history, 4. a center for documenting ethnic activity and progress, 5. a resource for maintaining foreign languages, 6. a means to perpetuate ethnic identities and traditions, 7. a symbol of the ethnic group's desire to redress evils perpetrated by society against it, and 8. an inducement for 'Anglos' to respect diverse cultures" (Note 9).

These references show that a library is not only designed to construct knowledge, to support education, and to provide necessary information. Rather it has multiple functions which serve the need of various communities. The library has been dedicated to fulfill the needs of the communities and to provide programs to increase educational opportunities for ethnic groups.

According to United States Census Bureau (2012), 36.9% of population in New York City is foreign

born. Also, 48.7% of population 5 years and over in New York City speaks language other than English at home (Note 10). From these data, it is evident that New York City is constructed from multicultural and multilingual communities. Many people whose first language is not English are concentrated in New York City.

The United States Census Bureau (2010), "Language Use in the United States," provides the data of the proficiency of English speaking ability of population 5 years and over. The levels of English proficiency are divided into four categories: very well, well, not well, and not at all. The percentage of each category was the following; very well was 54.3 percent, well was 20.9 percent, not well was 17.4 percent and not at all was 7.4 percent (Note 11).

These demographics have made an influence to the service and educational programming of the library. Various services not limited to ESOL program are provided to immigrants in New York Public Library. Library services include online tools for learning English, lectures about immigrant visa, heritage week to honor people's different backgrounds, citizenship classes and so on. The library has more function than just providing information. By providing educational opportunities, citizens can think about their lives and possibilities. In actuality, the services held at libraries throughout New York City have acted as a gateway for immigrants to actively participate in American society.

6. Immigrant Service in New York City

To further understand the role of library in immigrant education, immigrant services in New York Public Library focusing on ESOL class will

be looked into. First, I will illustrate the distinct characteristics of New York City from the viewpoint of the demographic structure of race.

Table 1: Demographics of New York

	New York City	New York
Population	8,336,697	19,570,261
White alone	44.0%	65.7%
Black or African American alone	25.5%	15.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.7%	0.6%
Asian alone	12.7%	7.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.1%	0.0%
Two or More Races	4.0%	3.0%
Hispanic or Latino	28.6%	17.6%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	33.3%	58.3%

(Note: Adapted from New York City QuickFacts: Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>, Copyright 2012 by United States Census Bureau.)

This data shows that New York City is constructed from various ethnic groups. A large population has limited English proficiency and this becomes a burden for people who are seeking employment and wishing for career enhancement. New York Public Library uses the data to illustrate the role of immigrants in the labor market in New York City as the following.

Immigrants play a crucial role in the City's labor market, comprising 43 percent of all city residents in the labor force in 2000. However, because of limited communication skills, immigrant workers are over-represented in the often lower-paying service, manufacturing, and construction industries, and many reside in some of the City's poorest neighborhoods (Note 12) .

Thus, having English proficiency is necessary for

immigrants who are looking for opportunities to work in New York City. The libraries are committed to providing English language programs that are designed to ensure immigrants to acquire English proficiency. The free English education service such as ESOL class held at libraries is significant since a library offers easier access for those who are trying to learn English.

New York Public Library has provided ESOL class for immigrants from more than 70 different countries. The following is the statement which the library indicates about the demands of English classes in New York City.

The demand for ESOL classes in New York City far exceeds available resources. According to New York Immigration Coalition, member organizations consistently identify the shortage of ESOL classes as one of the most critical issues

facing immigrant adults in their communities. The demand is overwhelming — so much so that a number of providers hold lotteries to decide who can attend their classes. Because the Library is one of few providers in New York City offering this service free-of-charge to students at the most basic level of English proficiency, classes are filled to capacity, and thousands of students must be turned away each year (Note 13) .

This shows that in recent years, the demand for ESOL class in New York Public Library has increased, and the library has been working to fulfill these needs of immigrants. Even though the library has continued to provide learning opportunities for immigrants by offering education programs, the demand of learning English exceeds the supply. However, as a result of offering English language service, the library has become the place where immigrants are encouraged to engage in American society and connect with diverse cultures.

7.English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program

English language service is available for free at selected libraries. In the case of New York Public Library, ESOL classes are held at various libraries in Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island. In order to sign up for the ESOL class, attending the information session that is held at particular dates is required. In the information session, details about the program are provided, and then participants can register for classes. After the registration, the participants' English abilities are evaluated and then they are assigned to classes of various levels. Since the program is designed for adults, the participants have to be over 16 years old. No identification documents are required to register for the classes.

The classes are held all year from Monday to

Saturday, and each participant is required to take two hours course twice a week for at least 10 weeks. The ESOL classes provide various materials that match the level of students' English proficiency. In class, materials such as the television show that are specially designed for immigrants in New York City are used for conversation practices. Additionally, access to the computer software that teaches English is also available to all participants of the ESOL class so that they can study at home.

It is important to emphasize that library is not only considered as the place of lifelong education, but the place where immigrants can access when they need assistance. Especially for immigrants who are not in American education system, the library is one of the places where they can go and find information that is needed. Immigrants who did not receive education in the United States and those who are not familiar with American culture can have access to the library when they have problems in understanding the different culture, government system and various issues. Thus, libraries have tried to satisfy the needs of immigrants in the diverse communities.

Cultural institutions such as libraries have paid close attention to the needs of ethnic minorities and this is reflected in their services. In libraries, immigrants can gather necessary information and learn English as well as American cultural value. So, the library has introduced immigrants to American society. The libraries including New York Public Library have also acted as a community center where different cultures and diverse communities can meet together.

8.Promotion of Educational Service in Library

Marketing research for effective library service is important, since there will be no service without participants who are interested in the program. Although library do not sell goods, meeting the needs of people is important for the service. Helen Coote

(1994) defines “selling” as the following.

Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines ‘to sell’ as ‘to give or give up for money or other equivalent,’ but also ‘to cause someone to accept (eg an idea, plan): to convince of the value of something’. So when, in response to a request for information a librarian ‘causes someone to accept’ what can be obtained and sends that person away happy, then a sale has been made. ... When a librarian matches each request to the resources available, it’s a sale (Note 14).

So, in the case of New York Public Library, I will consider how the library promotes the services to the citizens including immigrants. The ESOL class is just one of many educational programs, and other services are also offered at New York Public Library. Each library has different approaches in providing information about these services. In New York Public Library, the information about what programs are offered and who can take these services can be accessed through different types of communication medium.

For example, flyers about the ESOL program are available for library users and flyers are also distributed to the people of the community. The information about ESOL program also can be found on New York Public Library’s webpage where people who are interested in the program can grasp details. In recent years, promotion of library service has the tendency to rely on the use of social media. These social network services include facebook, twitter, and google +. The social media provides information about library, communities, services, programs, and recommended books.

However, the challenging problem for immigrants whose first language is not English remains unsolved, since this promotion is not always effective if citizens have difficulties in reading English. Thus, there is an

urgent need for providing more detailed information about the services offered at the libraries in the diverse communities. Although some information is provided in languages other than English such as Spanish, immigrants who are not familiar with this language will have difficulties in understanding the services in general. There should be various approaches of service promotion so that diverse communities can have the necessary information to access the services of library.

9. Conclusion

In an age of globalization, understanding the necessity of various services offered at libraries for immigrants is essential when thinking about the growth of foreign born population. To participate in the library service such as ESOL program is not only to learn the language but also to be involved in the community. The library offers information so that people in the diverse communities can think about problems and find solutions individually. Although Japan does not have a large immigrant population, Japan is accepting more foreign born workers in recent years. Providing information and language services for these diverse communities is necessary.

Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has mentioned that the ideal image of future library of Japan is to understand the current state of community and to recognize the needs of innovative services that can be useful for the citizens. In short, the report states that these efforts of library should result in spreading the ideal image such as “go to library when you need help,” “ask a librarian when you do not understand,” so that it can give the recognition that “library is useful” to the community (Note 15).

It can be stated that the library service in the United States will be a model when Japanese cultural institutions decide to provide services and language programs to the diverse communities. By looking

into how the library service has changed according to the transformation of society, the ideal service that will be required in libraries can be figured out. I have looked into immigrant services especially focusing on ESOL program in cultural institution using New York Public Library as an example, but more evaluated details about the services at cultural institution are necessary. By researching and evaluating services, it is possible to create the ideal educational service that fits more effectively to the needs of citizens.

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