

研究論文

# Promoting Cultural Diversity through Museum ESOL Program

Shoko Nagata  
Kansai University

Keywords: Adult Education, Museum, Outreach Program, Literacy Program, ESOL

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, literacy, numeracy and ICT (Information and Communicative Technology) are considered as basic skills and improving these skills are necessary when competing in the global market. The concept of 'skills' in relation to life-long education can be seen in educational reform strategy. The objective of this research is to explore practices of adult education, especially for the diverse population in United Kingdom. The change in demography suggests the increasing needs of educational opportunities for diverse population. This research will examine the data obtained from observation of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): ESOL program at Victoria and Albert Museum in March 2015. The reason for choosing this museum for the observation is due to the fact that the museum recognizes the changing needs of community and thus provides ESOL program to people with diverse culture.

## 2. Demography of United Kingdom

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland comprises England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This section will overview the trend of England and Wales population and examine the characteristics of the diverse population. According to *Migrants in the UK* (2017), the migrant population has increased from about 3.8 million in 1993 to 8.7 million in 2015 (Note 1). Additionally, the data of *Migrants in the Labour Market* (2016) illustrates that the number of working age people (18-64) in

the United Kingdom has increased from 3.0 million in 1993 to 7.0 million in 2015 (Note 2). As a result, the foreign-born population in total employment increased from 7.2 % to 17.7 % in 2015 (Note 3). This shows that the migrant in employment is increasing and is a significant part of the labor market.

The study, *Migrants in the UK*, notes that every year, the number of foreign born population is increasing in the United Kingdom. Table 1 shows the distribution of foreign-born population in the United Kingdom. When looking into the distribution, it is evident that a significant number of foreign born population live in London in year 2015. The table demonstrates that about a half of the foreign-born population are distributed in London (36.8%) and South East England (12/8%).

Table 1 Distribution of Foreign-Born Population, 2015

Region	Percentage in 2015
London	36.8%
South East	12.8%
East	8.8%
West Midlands	7.9%
North West	7.9%
East Midland	5.7%
Yorkshire	5.6%
South West	5.1%
Scotland	4.3%
Wales	2.2%
North East	1.6%
Northern Ireland	1.4%

Reference: Rienzo, C., and C. Vargas-Silva, (2017). *Migrants in the UK: An Overview*. Migration Observatory, University of Oxford. <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/>. p.3.

The distribution of foreign-born population shows that when comparing the regions of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, London is the most ethnically diverse area. Table 2 shows the population of London by ethnic groups. This table demonstrates that there is high concentration of people from ethnic minority communities in the city of London. The following section will look into the education reform strategy which focuses on the improvement of “skills” for people in United Kingdom.

Table 2: Ethnic Groups in London, 2011

Ethnic Groups	Population
All categories: Ethnic group	8,173,941
White	4,887,435
English/Welsh/	3,669,284
Scottish/Northern Irish/	
British	
Irish	175,974
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	8,196
Other White	1,033,981
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	405,279
White and Black Caribbean	119,425
White and Black African	65,479
White and Asian	101,500
Other Mixed	118,875
Asian/Asian British	1,511,546
Indian	542,857
Pakistani	223,797
Bangladeshi	222,127
Chinese	124,250
Other Asian	398,515

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1,088,640
African	573,931
Caribbean	344,597
Other Black	170,112
Other ethnic group	281,041
Arab	106,020
Any other ethnic group	175,021

Reference: Adapted from Nomis. (2011). *S201EW - Ethnic group*. Retrieved from <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>.

### 3. Education Reforms Strategy for Improving Skills

This section will look into educational reform strategy since the Blair administration (1997-2007) that focuses on education and skills. Tony Blair, the leader of the Labour Party became the prime minister after John Major, Conservative party in 1997. His election campaign slogan, “education, education, education,” shows that in order to succeed, education is necessary. So, strategy that increased opportunities for education and lifelong learning was introduced. One of the document, *The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain* (1998) states that,

Learning is the key to prosperity- for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge based global economy of the twenty-first century (Note 4).

As this document writes, in order to succeed economically, creating a learning society and culture has become an urgent task. The goal of *The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain* is not only to increase employment but also to build a united society by encouraging creativity and innovation through the culture of learning (Note 5).

During Blair administration, the improvement of skills through education and training was emphasized. The document, *A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy* (1999) reported that around 7 million people, one in five adults in the United Kingdom were functionally illiterate, which meant that these adults had literacy level at or below that of 11 years old (Note 6). In addition, more adults were having difficulty with numeracy skills. Thus, this document pointed out the need for a national strategy to improve these skills. In response to this report, *Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy* (2001b) was published by Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). As a result, the government increased investment in lifelong learning so that all adults can engage in learning to improve literacy and numeracy skills (Note 7). Although there are many other reforms made in education during this time such as *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World Class Skills* (2006), *Skills for Sustainable Growth: Strategy Document* (2012) and more, this paper looks into how these reforms are supporting the diverse communities.

In 2001, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) also published, *Adult ESOL: Core Curriculum* (DfES, 2001a) to improve literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults (Note 8). The document notes that creating standard and curriculum of ESOL encourage participants learn and develop necessary skills which are needed in the United Kingdom. To provide a framework for English Language learning, the national standard of literacy and numeracy is categorized from Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1, to Level 2. The speaking, listening, reading and writing skills of participants can be assessed by the ESOL standard to serve different learning needs of individuals. The document writes that some participants of the ESOL program left their countries unwillingly and are facing culture shock

in the United Kingdom. So, the program intends to help those who are settling in the United Kingdom to understand the work and immigration system (Note 9). As this program shows, ESOL program supports improvement of language skills and provides an opportunity for learning to the diverse population. The following section will look into ESOL practices in museum.

#### 4. Museum's Educational Practices to the Diverse Communities

Today, in globalized society, museum has to fulfill the responsibility for diverse communities. In response to the changes in the demography, cultural institutions such as museum increase awareness of multiple perspectives and collaborate with the communities.

There are many adult educational programs that are held in museums to improve skills. One of the classes that is highly in demand is the ESOL program to improve English skills. ESOL programs are many times funded by government through *Skills for Life* budgets, however, some of the programs are privately founded. Since learning English directly relates to acquire work opportunities and citizenship, many enroll in these programs to improve English skills (Note 10).

This section will examine the ESOL program in Victoria and Albert Museum, which is located in London, one of the most ethnically diverse area in England. The museum works on innovative programs which include ESOL that supports the diverse audience and the changing society. As the museum states: "The V&A recognises that in this rapidly changing world museums need to explore new methods of engagement in order to be relevant to, and representative of, the diverse communities that we serve (Note 11)." This commitment to the diverse audience is reflected in (the) ESOL program that is a part of adult community projects.

#### 4-1. General Information of the Program

The ESOL program in museum offers learning opportunities that improve speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Each ESOL program is held for two hours in length and ESOL tutor who works in the museum leads as a guide. The participants of ESOL programs are adult immigrants, refugees, migrant workers and asylum seekers whose first language are not English.

The Victoria and Albert Museum works in association with further education institutions and other organizations that provide ESOL programs to regional communities. The participants of ESOL program at Victoria and Albert museum can choose programs from the following galleries: British Galleries, China, Glass, Japan, Islamic Middle East, Medieval & Renaissance and South Asia. These various programs aimed at increasing participants' awareness of cultural diversity.

#### 4-2 Class Observation and Analysis

Class observation was conducted in March 2015. During the observation of ESOL program, participants visited British Gallery of Victoria and Albert Museum. In this class, the participants learned about British lifestyle from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and examined themes such as 'birth, marriage, and death' through exhibition of religious rituals and objects displayed in the gallery. From the exhibition such as British furniture and housing decorations, participants learned about British way of life in those days.

What is evident from observing ESOL program at Victoria and Albert Museum is that, through museum's ESOL program, participants develop new connections to the communities. In this case, by looking at the object and art from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century, the participants deepen understanding of the world they live in. For example, "Great Bed of Ware," made by Hans Vredeman de Vries during 1590 to

1600 was used in the ESOL program to point out the relevance to today's society. The four-poster bed that was three meters wide was introduced in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, which was first performed in 1601 (Note 12). The ESOL tutor from Victoria and Albert museum explained this object by describing the historical significance in relation to Shakespeare's writings and used comparisons to graffiti today. By learning from these explanations and examining the object that is displayed in front of them, the participants experience British way of living at that time and become more connected to British culture. During the program, participants of ESOL program interact with their classmates who are from different cultures. They become more aware of different narratives and multiplicity of voices while looking at the same object and engaging in discussion. The characteristic of learning in the museum is that each individual brings his or her own perspective when interacting with other participants.

Moreover, the diverse programs offered at museums enhance intercultural competence. Fatini and Tirmizi (2006) defines intercultural competence as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself (Note 13)." The museum can improve intercultural competence skills through intercultural dialogue. The definition for intercultural dialogue is as follows:

Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organizations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes (Note 14).

As this case study shows, the museum has devoted to cultural diversity by promoting various educational programs that support the needs of communities. The educational program such as the ESOL program serves as the outreach program which attracts audiences who are ethnically diverse. In addition, it is essential for museum to continue to approach potential partners and take initiative outside the museum (Note 15). Network of European Museum Organisations: NEMO (2015) states that “the task of outreach is to initiate and engaging dialogue between people in which everyone is treated as equals (Note 16).”

To promote intercultural dialogue, museum should facilitate dialogue and use these programs to connect people from different backgrounds. Such learning environment is essential, so museums have to support the understanding of cultural diversity in the community. Concerning about this, International Council of Museums (ICOM)’s writes as follows:

Museums have increasingly become forums for the promotion of community relations and peace. In addressing the problems of the world created due to inadequate cross cultural understanding, historical fears and ethnic tensions, museums are increasingly connecting with the important role that they can play in the promotion of cultural understanding through negotiated activities driven by community relations strategies (Note 17).

This statement demonstrates the museum’s active role of enhancing relationship with the diverse community. The continuing public support of museums has contributed to various educational programs for diverse communities in the museum. However, the shrinking funding for *Skills for Life* budget results in fewer number of programs to be held in museums. Funding for these population is

essential to improve English skill so that they can participate in communities and have better working opportunity.

## 5. Conclusion

Improving literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is essential for Britain to strive in the global economy. As the government’s education reform strategy suggests, life-long education to adults is necessary not only to compete in the global economy but to create a united society. Life-long education and training was emphasized during Blair administration. As a result of these reforms, the diverse population whose first language is not English also received many educational opportunities.

In recent years, museums have provided various educational services for diverse population. From the observation of ESOL program at Victoria and Albert Museum, it can be stated that the museum plays an active role of providing educational programs that respond to the needs of the underserved population. In the museum’s ESOL program, individuals can share their own ideas and increase awareness of diverse cultures through art. From the discussion, participants can enhance understanding of different perspective. Therefore, continuing this program is vital not only to improve English ability but to promote interaction among diverse community, which is essential to strengthen engagement with community that is ethnically diverse.

Note: A part of this paper was originally presented at the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Japanese Educational Research Association at J.F. Oberlin University, on August 25-27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## Endnotes:

- (1) Rienzo, C., and C. Vargas-Silva, 2017, p.3.
- (2) Ibid., p.3.
- (3) Ibid., p.3.

- (4) DfEE. 1998, p.7.
- (5) Ibid., p.10.
- (6) DfEE, 1999.
- (7) DfES, 2001b.
- (8) DfES, 2001a.
- (9) DfES, 2001a, p.5.
- (10) Those who wish to receive citizenship in the United Kingdom has to prove their English abilities. TOEFL certificate can be one of the qualification that is accepted by the government.
- (11) Victoria and Albert Museum, 2017a.
- (12) Victoria and Albert Museum. 2017.
- (13) Fantini, A. and Tirmizi, A., 2006, p.12.
- (14) ERICarts, 2007, p.xiii.
- (15) NEMO, 2015, p.12.
- (16) Ibid., p.12.
- (17) ICOM.

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(Peer-reviewed. 査読論文)