

Deborah Murray – Masters Thesis (2006) Abstract:

Spinning their own webs: An exploration of English Second Language learning for newcomers in New Brunswick

This qualitative study explored the English second language (ESL) experiences of immigrants and refugees in Fredericton, New Brunswick, who participated in a level three class of the Language of Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. Narrative inquiry and phenomenology were the combined methodology used in the study. Several factors connected the experiences of newcomers to their resettlement and goals for further education and employment. They were defined in three categories: situational, dispositional, and institutional. Situational factors were: community involvement; cultural readjustment; personal safety and inclusiveness; prior language learning; family responsibility and support; financial constraints; previous education, skills and experience; discrimination; impact on native language; and informal ESL learning. Dispositional factors included: perception of age as a barrier to learning; anxiety, stress and depression; and motivation. Institutional factors were: transportation; formal ESL learning; and bureaucratic disconnectedness. Metaphors that emerged from participants' narratives expressed four phases of cultural adjustment: disoriented, discouraged, energized, and determined. There are implications for ESL practitioners, service providers, and policymakers. Suggestions were made to extend ESL educational programs, create more effective communication between government offices and immigrants, and generate greater community awareness of the needs of newcomers.