Learning English for a Life of Choice in New Zealand

A Case Study of Afghan Women Refugees’ Bilingual Class Experiences in Palmerston North

A research project presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of International Development

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the experiences of a group of women refugees learning English as part of their resettlement in New Zealand. The women’s husbands were working as interpreters for the New Zealand Police in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. To ensure their safety after the New Zealand Police were withdrawn, these Afghan families were invited to resettle in Palmerston North, New Zealand. To attain in-depth results, this research report focuses on the women’s efforts to integrate within the social life of New Zealand and their experiences in acquiring English as a tool to their successful resettlement program.

A small study was conducted in the context of an English Language Partners’ (ELP) Bilingual English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL)-Literacy class for refugees. Participants for this research were five Afghan women, two ELP’s ESOL teachers, and one of the women’s husbands. The methods used were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observation, and curriculum analysis.

This report is framed within adult pre-literacy education and investigates whether women refugees become empowered through taking literacy classes. Findings show that there are links between language acquisition within the refugees’ resettlement process and personal empowerment.

Afghan women’s acquisition of English language skills has brought more personal control over their mobility and has changed relationships with their husbands to some extent since moving to New Zealand. Furthermore, the woman’s learning experiences have brought them to a level where they can move on from ELP to a higher English level class.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### GLOSSARY

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<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELP</td>
<td>English Language Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETC</td>
<td>English Teaching College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Language 1 / the First Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS Tampa</td>
<td>United States of America’s cargo ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>New Literacy Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZPRT</td>
<td>the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNCC</td>
<td>Palmerston North City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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