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**Success stories: Experiences of
non-English speaking background students
in an English-medium tertiary programme**

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Gayleen Evelyn Taylor

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of non-English speaking background (NESB) students are enrolling in English-medium education programmes. The fact that these students are generally successful in their studies is seldom mentioned in academic literature. It is hoped that information from this study will fill a gap in recent literature on this topic.

This study investigates and celebrates the experiences of four NESB students who have successfully graduated from an English-medium programme which delivers the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education). The key question investigated is – what enabled these students to achieve in an education setting so different from their home language, culture and philosophy? Factors such as motivation and support structures were also investigated.

Within a qualitative approach, narratives were used to record and retell participants' stories. A credit approach was also employed. This fits in with sociocultural theory, which values a student's contribution to the learning experience. Contextual features also had a role to play in participants' success, so links to ecological theoretical perspectives are made. The influence of motivation in success, as acknowledged in social cognitive theory, is also discussed.

Participants were clear about the role of motivation in their academic success. Intrinsic motivation was found to be particularly important; being influenced by a range of factors. The factors identified included the funds of knowledge participants brought to their study, their development of self-efficacy, a sense of agency and self-regulatory practices. It is proposed that these factors have fundamental relationships with each other by influencing achievement and mastery in the other factors.

Support systems were found to play a crucial role in participants' success. These support systems were found to be the family, the institution, colleagues and classmates. Governmental agencies also were accessed to provide financial support. Recommendations and implications from the study affirm the importance of professional development for teachers of NESB students. In particular, understanding topics relating to funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, agency and self-directed learning were noted as relevant for teachers of NESB students.

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