

Migrant/refugee learners and their tutors participating in narratives of success

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Masako's story

5	<p>I came from Japan. I speak Japanese and I was very scared to leave Japan. I wanted to protect my children from anything dangerous and unknown. I became very sensitive and a nervous mother. When I arrived I was afraid to communicate with people. If people smiled, I thought I had done something wrong. I completely lost my confidence. When I first came to NZ, I was married but after 3 years he left, we got divorced. Now I live in Nelson with my two daughters and Kiwi partner. I have been living in New Zealand for 7 years.</p>
10	<p>When I first came to NZ my English was terrible. I didn't talk to people. My state of mind wasn't very good. Soon after I arrived, a problem I experienced with English was not knowing how to react. I didn't know what people were saying. I was always afraid my reaction may be inappropriate. Another problem I had with my English was answering a telephone. I could never react immediately. After a while, however, I moved to Nelson from Auckland. I was still uncomfortable to speak English in the English class.</p>
15	<p>I realized things were getting better when I was able to meet my home tutor and speak with her outside of the classroom. Before I was always afraid to make a mistake and I was very defensive, but with my home tutor I could relax and my barriers fell away. In those early days, another example of success with my English was learning not to be afraid to make mistakes. I also gained confidence.</p>
20	<p>Now, my English is getting better. I am enjoying using English. My experience of English has become wider. I really understand what people say. I find I can more easily join in with new people. I can more easily express myself. What I can really do well when I use English is communicate feelings. Also, I remember once communicating with an elderly person with Parkinsons. I realized that not only English is important but also being relaxed and having an open heart. However, when I use English I'm still having</p>
25	<p>problems with describing situations with precise details. Also, it's hard for me to understand different accents. I would like to be able to solve this problem by having many experiences meeting different people and communicating in English.</p>
30	<p>In the future, I would like to use English to gain knowledge. I want to be able to communicate more with people. Everything I studied before has been from the Japanese point of view. I imagine that I will also be able to work as a caregiver with confidence. I will never feel that I have learned enough English. I would need to go back and be born a Kiwi!! Learning English is important for me because I believe that language is a way of expressing my personality. It is important for understanding and communicating with people. That's the end of my story.</p>

Problems – descriptions of themes

1. **Understanding generally**: responses indicating problems with understanding an interlocutor's turn at talk or written text.
... not knowing how to react. I didn't know what people were saying.
2. **Understanding – language related**: responses indicating problems with understanding an interlocutor's turn at talk or written text with specific reference to a language system or skill (e.g. spoken or written language, vocabulary, accent).
... the Kiwi accent.
3. **Understanding – daily living**: understanding of an interlocutor's turn at talk or written text during everyday living activities.
... understanding people who spoke to me on the phone, especially strangers.
4. **Speaking**: responses to do with speaking difficulties, or not achieving a successful oral interaction.
... that I couldn't talk to people.
5. **Daily living**: problems with everyday activities such as catching a bus, making an appointment, shopping, or using the ATM.
... when I went shopping, went to the pharmacy and to the doctor.
6. **Affect**: responses indicating emotional responses accompanying problems.
... the teacher would ask a question and I would look as if I was a stupid person.
7. **Vocabulary**: problems associated with reading words, understanding words or using words.
... when I want to do something I don't have the words to use.
8. **Reading and writing**: problems with reading texts such as library books, newspapers and bus timetables, and with writing in English.
... I couldn't write English.
9. **Grammar**: specific reference to experiencing sentence-level problems in using English.
... mostly the grammar – past, future tenses.
10. **Be understood**: responses indicating problems with being understood by others.
... making myself understood, especially in the shopping centre.
11. **General communication**: general communication problems without specific reference to any language system or skill.
... I could not communicate at all.
12. **Family involvement**: refers to help or support given by family members to deal with problems, or problems involving family members.
... I am old. My husband died, and I was alone shopping, and it was difficult.
13. **Employment**: problems obtaining work or problems experienced in the workplace.
... I would like to work but I couldn't.
14. **Needing help**: responses indicating that help is needed because of language difficulties.
... needed an interpreter for any information or appointments.
15. **Social interaction**: problems regarding interactions with English speakers and Kiwis.
... I didn't have chance to improve my English. I didn't have Kiwi friends.

Successes – descriptions of themes

1. **Tuition**: an indication that some form of English tuition has been taken up, such as with Home Tutors or more formal English classes.
... I went to a language school, which helped me to understand [road] sign words.
2. **Using the phone**: success at answering or engaging in a conversation on the phone.

- ... being able to answer the telephone.
3. **General improvement:** indicating a general improvement in English, without specifying any particular skill.
... after five years my English is better.
 4. **Receiving support:** achieving successes with the support of others.
... communicate with people in church. They were friendly and patient and willing to help.

Imagined successes – additional themes

1. **Further education:** studying further in community program or higher education context.
... join classes for painting.
2. **Teaching English:** teaching English within own community or in home country.
... help beginners of English.
3. **No need for support:** learners feel they know enough English to not need further formal teaching or support from proficient English speakers
... don't need my English tutor anymore.

The Composite Ideal L2 Self

The Composite Ideal L2 Self represents a dynamic component of the identity of an adult learner who imagines his/her possible self speaking English fluently, resourcefully and effectively while working in a good job and socially interacting with local English-speaking members of the imagined community. S/he would live a full, successful life enjoying, for example, shopping on his/her own, opening a bank account, using the phone, and corresponding with people in schools and hospitals. In the community, s/he would generally understand the English encountered, as well as understand specific linguistic aspects of this English in order to accomplish daily living. In this imagined community the Ideal L2 Self would not be frightened to communicate in English, but instead would feel confident using it every day, everywhere. S/he would be able to read newspapers and library books and write letters to friends. S/he would use English to communicate with family members, where necessary, such as to help his/her children with schoolwork. S/he will continue to learn more English formally, and possibly even teach it, and would further his/her education to achieve chosen life goals. Eventually, there would be no need for further support to learn English.

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