International Mail Order Brides: A Narrative Inquiry Investigating the Lives of Six Female Second Language Learners, Their Literacies and Their Acquisition of the English Language

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Abstract
This study focuses on the population of women voluntarily entering the United States via arranged, often through the Internet, marriages. A congressional report (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006) on “International Matchmaking Organizations” reports that the number of immigrants coming to the United States with a “K-1 fiancée visa”, the temporary visa status used to have a nonnative individual enter the United States for the purpose of marriage, to be growing rapidly. Of these individuals, 79% are women, referred to in both government data collection and sociological literature using the century old moniker of “mail order brides”. Through first-hand experience, over a period of 20 years teaching and acting as an administrator for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, I have found this population of women, International Mail Order Brides (IMOBs), to present significant English language and literacy needs. Demonstrating inconsistent attendance in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, they exhibit low-level English language fluency skills. This study of six International Mail Order Brides, all of whom live in rural settings within Pennsylvania, emanated from these observations. Participants were located through their attendance in community based, adult ESL programs. Research conducted used the case study method offered the participants the opportunity to share the lifelong progression of their biliteracies. Each of the narratives is transcribed in the words of the participant to assure the critical element of authenticity. The biliterate lives presented through this restorying is interpreted using Hornberger’s Continua of Biliteracy theory in order to identify the multidimensional International Mail Order Bride biliteracy. Analysis revealed five of the six participants to be monolingual, with no agency given to their L1. All developed their biliteracies successively, living currently with the L2 in the majority power position. Five of the six IMOBs function at the less powerful oral-vernacular end of the Continua, with few literate abilities. The value of shared life stories formulates an in-depth representation of how the specific life choice of this population drives the need for highly contextualized English language opportunities, providing clear data to guide the field of Second Language Literacy in creating a pedagogical response.

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What is Second Language Acquisition? In second language learning, language plays an institutional and social role in the community. It functions as a recognized means of communication among members who speak some other language as their native tongue. Narrative-type narrative inquiry gathers events and happenings as its data and uses narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories. To recognize the impact of homelessness from their understandings of life, the study reports in-depth conversations with people who are homeless in Japan. Through the qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry, I engaged in a close relationship with three men who are/were homeless and inquired into their experiences of being homeless. From our conversations, four narrative threads emerged: (1) living with memories of loss, (2) feeling of being without control, (3) feeling discouraged from weaving forward-looking stories, and (4) nourishing generosity amidst acquisition of a second language. The analysis focused on the relevance of using on-line material to motivate students. learning a second language; they rather combine both orientations in their learning. Brown cites the example of international students residing in the United States, learning English for academic purposes while at the same time, wishing to become integrated with the people and culture of the country. As we have shown in this research, motivation is an important factor in L2 achievement. Language acquisition in Second Life: Improving self-efficacy beliefs. Proceedings. ascilite Auckland 2009: 464-474. Investigating Japanese learners' beliefs about language learning. System, 4, 473-492. Siskin, H. J. (Ed.)