

AN ESL LANGUAGE LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR  
PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: SPOUSES OF INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENTS AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND

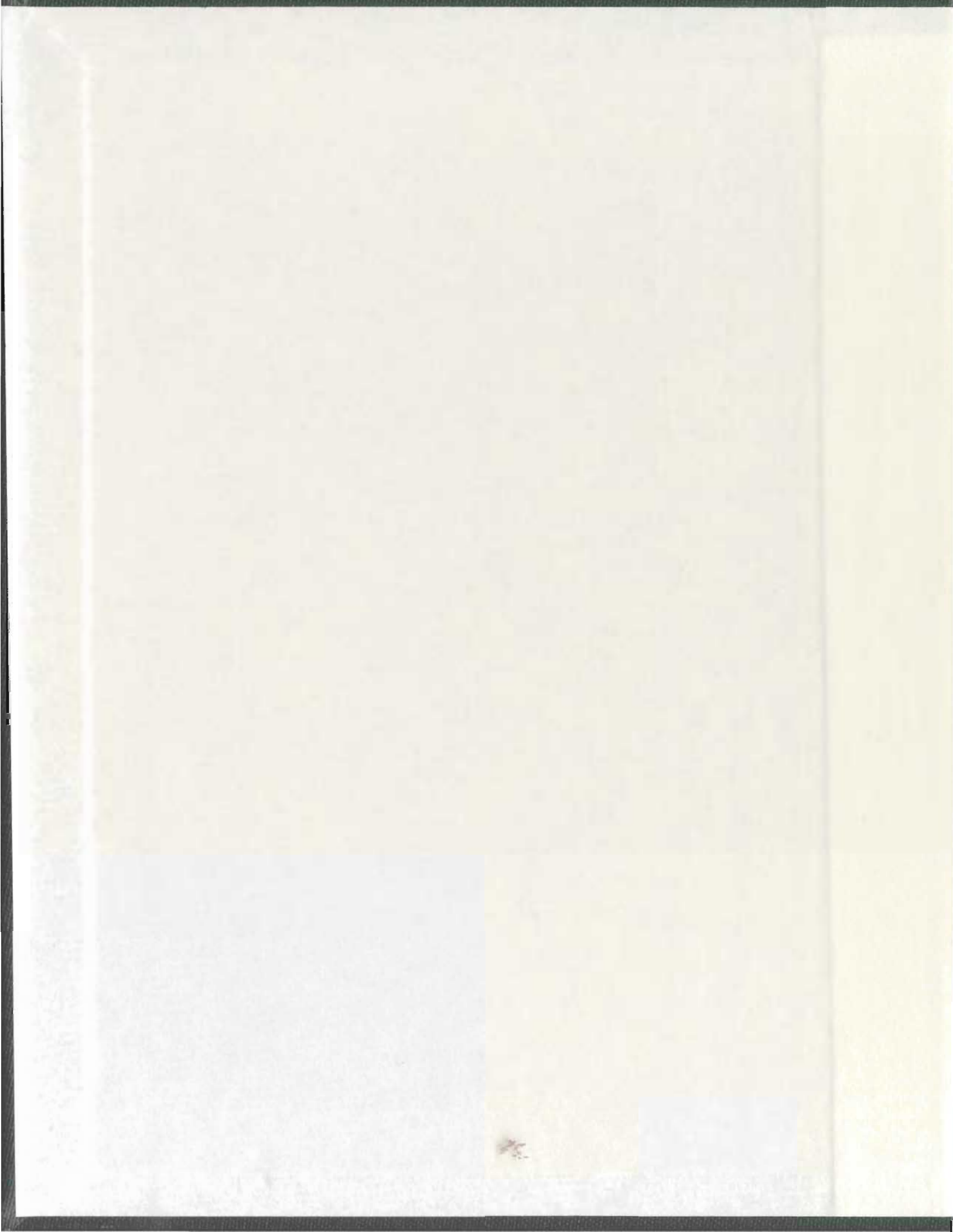
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**AN ESL LANGUAGE LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR PROSPECTIVE  
STUDENTS: SPOUSES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND**

By Xiaoqian Kong

A project submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Education  
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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Background and the purpose of the study**

Sometime last year I met Mary (pseudonym), a woman from southern Asia, and we had a chat. Although I already knew that she came with her husband, a post-doctoral fellow at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), and that she stays at home, I was surprised to know that she was unhappy to be at home all the time. However, she had no choice. It was even more surprising for me to know she has her Bachelor's Degree in Business and had worked for an international company, but she could not study here since she had done poorly in the English as a second language test.

I used to believe that international women like her became housewives because they had no higher education in their home country. I was wrong! I feel so sorry for her and this aroused my curiosity about the status of spouses of other international students. From my work as an instructor for a reading course for the spouses and my personal contacts with international students, I had chance to find out. Interestingly, I found that the husbands as spouses of international students usually try all means to get admission and manage to further their schooling. Nonetheless, Mary is not alone. There are many wives who came to St. John's with a high level education background but had to give up the opportunity of further education. Some stay at home with loneliness; some get jobs which are not appropriate for their education. The longer they are away from higher education, the more chances they miss; the longer they stay at home, the more isolated they feel; and the more unhappy they are, the more likely it is that their husbands' academic achievement would be affected which may result in their leaving for

somewhere else. What is more, these women's voices will not be heard since they are often isolated and have no connection with other women in similar situations (Gilligan, 1982) and thus unable to share their feelings with others.

At the same time, "there is a clear trend" (AUCC, 2000, p. 2) of government promotion of international education in student recruitment. Following Australia, New Zealand, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, Canadian government has been seeking ways to improve policies and practice in order to be competitive in this world market. Memorial University of Newfoundland is no exception in this competition and it is aiming at internationalizing and expanding its international student population from approximately 340 at present to 1,200 by 2004 (Office of Students Recruitment and Promotion, 2000). As Dr. Meisen (2001) indicated, MUN was "raising the number of international students from about 400 to 1,200 and to doubling the number of students in Master's and doctoral programs to 3,200", which will be "\$30 million" contribution to the province per year. This will no doubt boost the economical development of St. John's and Newfoundland.

However, 2001 Census (Statistics Canada, 2003) shows that Canada's visible minority population is 13.4%, while Newfoundland had .7% visible minority population. Additionally, English predominates in Newfoundland and only 1.6% of Newfoundland population have mother tongue other than English. This province is ethnically and linguistically less diverse than elsewhere in Canada and how would this environment affect minority groups? It's probably harder for the spouses to find support in St. John's than it would be in a larger city. Having worked with international students and their

spouses, I got the impression that the wives are left out of the system mainly because of their failure to meet the English language proficiency requirement. Actually, comparing them with prospective students overseas, they have advantages in many aspects. For example, they do not have visa problems, and with a family here, they would likely adjust much more easily than others. However, English seems to be such a huge barrier and their lives have been changed so much by it. As one of them, I feel lucky to have got admission before my husband but my experience in ESL teaching and learning let me wonder how to help them out.

This project is intended to investigate this issue with the specific purpose of exploring those wives' experience with the existing ESL (English as a second language) service available to them. Four services have been offered by the University's ESL Center and they are: academic writing, academic reading, conversation group and conversation partner. Moreover, the study aims to find out what support would be necessary for them in an ESL Language Learning Community (ESLLC) to enable them to pass the university English requirements as well as gain entrance to MUN. Finally, the actual project, a model of this learning community, will be presented according to valuable information collected from this study. The investigation will be conducted focusing on five questions:

- A. In what ways has English fluency or lack of it been influencing the life of these women?
- B. How would these wives of international students evaluate MUN's current ESL service and support to them?

- C. Concerning their own needs in developing English skills, what do they think the university can do to help them?
- D. Would an ESL learning community help them? If so, what are their expectations for such a community?
- E. What would a model developed for such a community at MUN be like?

### **Significance of the study**

As a service evaluation and needs investigation, the study will provide information on adult ESL learning in a community-based non-formal setting. Sidwell (1992) pointed out the danger of not recognizing learners' needs, that is, "it can create barriers to learning of an institutional, pedagogical, social or personal nature" (p. 13). Actually, the process of language learning "often involves strong positive or negative emotions" (Stern, as cited in Sidwell, 1992, p. 9), in which stress and depression would be caused by negative feelings. This is especially true for women who also feel a need of relationships of caring with those in similar situations (Gilligan, 1982). An in-depth study of a particular setting would give a better understanding of how to meet their needs, which would contribute to a better service for them in a language learning community.

The ESL service would have to undergo some reform if its goal were to increase and retain its international population. As the study of Smith, Gauld, and Tubbs (1997) shows, it is of utmost importance to be responsive to the unique needs of this population. Otherwise, recruiting international students without identification of their particular needs and improvement of services to them may have a negative effect on the reputation of the

university internationally (Koenderman, 2000). In contrast, providing the necessary support to facilitate the adjustment of their spouses will not only help retain current international students, but will also attract students and scholars with families abroad to come here. In addition, husbands of international students will not be excluded to join the language learning community if they have the same needs. To help fulfill the university's recruitment plans and establish its reputation in internationally marketing, the study will provide policymakers and educators with meaningful information in the area of ESL services for spouses of international students.

### **Definition of key terms**

International students refer to students who come from a foreign country and who are not Canadian citizens. In this study, they include not only undergraduates but also graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Learning community is a setting that learners get together and learn together in an informal way. With help from the outside society, they share knowledge, make use of experience, and provide support to each other.

## **Chapter Two: Related Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

My idea of designing this study is greatly influenced by adult learning theories that promote lifelong learning, self-identity and community-based learning. In this chapter, I will first discuss how the study is framed by these theoretical concepts. Furthermore, policies on recruiting international students as well as supporting them with ESL services will be reviewed. Finally I will present similar efforts other universities have made on the same issue in literature.

### **Adult learning theories**

#### Lifelong Learning

Adult learners may decide to learn a foreign language for various reasons. To better understand their needs, their intention to learn should be recognized. According to Houle (as cited in Sidwell, 1992), they can be categorized as goal-orientated, activity-orientated, or learning-orientated learners. Among them, those who are learning orientated are called life-long learners as well. Longworth and Davies (1996) define this term as:

The development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments (p. 22).

This kind of learning is an experience of joy rather than torture. Learners are driven by their own desire to participate in the learning process and they will learn for the sake of learning. Therefore, learners are empowered by gaining knowledge to “make decisions, solve problems, think through actions and take possession of their own lives” (Longworth & Davies, 1996, p. 23). Besides this enjoyment of a sense of personal fulfillment, they also have more opportunities of better employment. In contrast, adults who do not participate in learning projects are likely to be poorly educated, poorly paid and socio-economically disadvantaged (Coolican, as cited in Cross, 1988).

In particular, the safe and relaxed learning environment created by lifelong learning is beneficial for women who seem to be barred from higher education (Reinharz, 1992). It removes external barriers to learning and creates new learning opportunities (Cross, 1988). Many women, especially those who “had successful school experiences and hold positive attitudes toward schools and education” (Cross, 1988, p. 129), will get more strengths and confidence in terms of new job opportunities.

#### Theories of self-identity

Identity, the sense of being and belonging, “is a powerful influence on our motivation” (Grinsberg & Wloodkowski, 1995, p. 302). This sense becomes obscure with unsupported language needs and negative experience, which usually results in the loss of self-esteem and uncertainty of self-concept. Language and self are found to be so closely bound (Cohen & Norst, 1989; Hermansson, n. d.) that “an attack on one is an attack on the other” (Cohen & Norst, 1989, p. 61). The unfamiliarity caused by a foreign language places learners in a “dependent and inferior position before their peers” (Cohen & Norst,

1989, p. 62). They often feel “attacked” because of their fear of the foreign language. However, a non-threatening learning environment helps them see positive-images of themselves and a stronger sense of self-identity will reinforce their sense of worth and facilitate their learning (Page & Page, 2000).

Moreover, women often feel the need to establish caring relationships and develop strong self-concepts (Gilligan, 1982; Hooks, 1981; Reinhartz, 1984) in this process. In a foreign country, they would need a sense of connection to drive away the feeling of isolation caused by the foreign environment. Because they tend to be more relationship and community focused, they may hate the discomfort caused by being alone and alien (Bell, 1997). Knowing and sharing with other women in similar situations would bring to them a sense of worth. The building of this partnership is essential in strengthening women’s self-identity in the learning of a foreign language (Norton, 2000; Toohey, 2000), which in turn smooths the learning process.

#### Community-based Learning

Learning is supposed to make changes in people’s lives. This happens more easily in a learning community where people bring their old knowledge and build new knowledge with others. Owens and Wang (1997) defined community-based learning as teaching strategies that help learners to identify what they want to learn with support from an unlimited set of resources. Here, community refers to “schools, formal and informal institutions in one's neighborhood, and the entire world through such resources as the Internet” (Owens & Wang, 1997, second section, para. 2)



Learners get fully involved in their learning process since they learn for themselves and they are all connected through community learning. Some adults may have been armed by their previous schooling to be able to study alone, but not all of them. The others would have a hard time struggling to learn on their own (Sidwell, 1992), especially when they are in a new country and culture without support. With a group of people in similar situations, it is more likely learners would be put in the picture of up-to-date information. Besides, they would have higher learning motivation and therefore more voluntary learning is likely to occur (Cross, 1988). Learners' needs of building relationships are addressed by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) who argue that relationship with peers ranks as the first important factor for learning. With appropriate connection with others, learners would be capable of solving problem by learning from others' experience. Meantime, with the establishment of relationships with others, they would develop "a response to others in the world and in the wider community" (Longworth & Keith, 1996, p. 5).

The non-threatening and caring environment (Longworth & Keith, 1996) is a particular quality of community-based learning. A fear-free formal or informal setting of learning is created among learners with support and encouragement from each other. As emotional beings, learners have confidence in having their voices heard only when they feel safe and secure (Shor, 1992; Page & Page, 2000). This would be realized by nurturing of supportive partnerships in a learning community (Longworth & Keith, 1996; Cross, 1981).

### **Recruiting international students and ESL service**

Active international student recruitment is a fairly recent phenomenon in the global community. According to AUCC (2000), Australia and New Zealand are among the first that makes visa application easier for international students regardless of the country of origin. Other countries such as the United Kingdom allow international students to have part-time jobs, while Canada is smoothing policies on their applications for permanent residence upon completion of their study within Canada. In Canada, as well, internationalization has become a trend for Canadian universities with 41% of all graduate students being international students in 1997 (AUCC, 1999). They believe that this trend will assist them to “maintain excellence in higher education and research, to contribute to the quality of life and to assure continued prominence for Canada in the world of the 21st century” (AUCC, 1999, para. 4).

Towards a framework of internationalization, strengthening of second and third language programs is emphasized by AUCC’s academic policy (AUCC, 1999). However, despite some degree of improvement in student service practices, research indicates that ESL is still an area that investments and efforts should be put on (e. g., Orchard, n. d.; Parsons, 2000; Wilson, 1995). For example, ESL classes are offered to international students and their families (Smith et al., 1997), but no childcare or children’s programs have been provided to those who have children but need to go to class at nighttime. Language plays such an essential part in students’ adjustment into the new environment that “their ability to communicate in English may have a direct bearing on how they are able to overcome their feelings of loneliness and isolation” (Orchard, n. d., p. 6). In terms

of improving the service, it is of greatest importance to identify their needs and involve them in the program planning (Parsons, 2000).

### **Previous Research**

Despite the vast research in improving service to international students (e. g., Orchard, n. d.; Dalton, 1999; Wilson, 1995; Parsons, 2000; AUCC, 1998; Walker, 1999), strictly speaking, only a little attention has been paid to the issue of ESL service to their spouses. The Spouses of International Students and Scholars Program (SISS) in Montana, the United States, which is intended to assist international women in their adjustment to new environment (Ojo, 1998), is the only research in the literature that shares some of the rationales with the current study. This eight-month program was an overall success based on the theoretical framework of “gender, power and language” (Ojo, 1998, p. 4). Participants enjoyed the program’s informality, the meeting with “others like their own” (Ojo, 1998, p. 13), and their involvement in the community organization. What is more, their English language skills were developed tremendously and so were their leadership skills (Ojo, 1998).

Similarly, both SISS and the current project have the goal of offering informal opportunities for those women to practice oral English. Their main difference is that the latter study will go beyond SISS’s intention of acclimatization and it aims at enhancing language ability as a way to empower international women through further education. Instead of going into a local community, like SISS, those women will build up one of their own within the broader university community, that of wives of international

students and that will meet their needs with the university's abundant resource and ESL professionals. Ultimately, many of them may become students at MUN themselves once their English improves.

### **Summary**

Women as adult ESL learners tend to learn best in a non-threatening and safe environment (Cross, 1988; Shor, 1992; Longworth & Keith, 1996). This ideal learning setting can be made real through community-based learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Owens & Wang, 1997; Longworth & Keith, 1996; Cross, 1988; Sidwell, 1992). They would feel free to share knowledge with others like themselves, be aware of their worth, and make changes in their life with the empowerment of knowledge (Shor, 1992). With the global trend of internationalization and the appealing for better ESL service (Walker, 1999; Orchard, n. d.; Parsons, 2000; Wilson, 1995), it is time to take international women into consideration as prospective students.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this preliminary study is to explore the perspectives of wives of international students on the ESL service of MUN and their insights for its improvement in order to develop the project and ultimately to establish a language learning community. This inquiry process is designed to gain knowledge and understanding of these women's personal experience and their perceptions of their individual needs in learning English as a second language in the particular setting of MUN. Otherwise, the study can be modified to other settings in which international women are in a similar situation. Thus, a qualitative approach which is "sensitive to women's experience" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993, p. 17) is the best way to draw a complex and holistic picture of this group of women's experience. Memorial University of Newfoundland is the site to study to "achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 10).

Qualitative inquiry "builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell 1998, p. 15). Traditionally, methods such as unstructured interviews and diary-keeping are categorized to qualitative research paradigms (Scott, 1996). In this study, individual and focus group interviews, reflective journals as well as a self-report questionnaire can be utilized to gain thick description of research problem at hand (Seidman, 1991). First of all, a questionnaire with open-ended questions helps identify and gather information about participants' experience and interest in the study. Then, semi-structured, open-

ended interviews can proceed with similar questions (Stake, 1995) and thus provide a chance for those women to share their own stories. The narrative nature of interview will open the door for me to examine “the teller’s representations and explanations of experience” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 1). As a follow-up, a focus group interview not only helps me to make sure that the interviewees have been accurately understood in the former interview, but also offers them an opportunity to share opinions with each other. Accordingly, the most valuable information can be yielded (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, the journal writing (Creswell, 1998) will help participants to deliberate on the research questions (Cortazzi, 1993) and catch what might be missed in interviews. In this case, individual experience and needs are appropriately studied qualitatively.

These methods will be utilized to achieve triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 1996; Scott, 1996; Creswell, 1998). Description rather than explanation of multiple sources of data helps to represent the “reality through the eyes of participants” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993, p. 16). As well, this helps to gain understanding of “the meaning of experience and behavior in the context and in its full complexity” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993, p. 16). Furthermore, grounded theory on how the language learning community can help those women out will be generated in the course of data analysis (Scott, 1996; Creswell, 1998). This feature of qualitative study enables us to negotiate meaning (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) with participants and get most out of the sources to develop theory. As Walker (1999) indicated, an in-depth examination of international students which will be limited by quantitative approach can only be achieved by qualitative approach.

A case study is “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (Merriam, 1998, p. 9). In this project, it is impossible to explore those international women’s perspectives separately from the context, that is, “the uniqueness of the situation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). By choosing Memorial University of Newfoundland as a single site and analysis of its uniqueness (Scott, 1996), a better understanding of women from diverse culture groups who have shared experience will be achieved. Meanwhile, multiple sources of information will be collected by in-depth data gathering for a thorough exploration of the case (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, the goal of this study is not to test any hypothesis, but to “appreciate the uniqueness and complexity” (Stake, 1995, p. 16) of those women’s situations. That is, “in a qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 16).

In all, for a better understanding of those women’s experience, the qualitative approach makes more sense of the meaning of their words. In qualitative research, particulars are meaningful (Eisner, 1998) and the knowing of them is worthwhile. What is more, its nature of openness “allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to that complexity, to respect it in its own right” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 7).

## **Method**

Maximum variation sampling was intended to be utilized in order to seek out women that represent the greatest difference in the same phenomenon (Patton, 1990).

Before data collection, a self-report questionnaire with a consent letter (See Appendix A and Appendix B) was sent only to women whose husbands are international students at MUN. From those who express interest, 8-10 women from different countries were to be invited to the further study and I was to choose those who represented the greatest difference in demographic background and experience. However, due to the low response rate from the questionnaire, convenient sampling (Scott, 1996) had to be applied and finally eight subjects were chosen according to their availability. As Scott (1996) pointed out, samples used for qualitative research are usually small but data collection and analysis should not be stopped until nothing new would be learned.

Data were collected over two month's period. It consists mainly of an individual interview, a focus group interview, and reflective journals. After direct contacts with the volunteer women, an interview was conducted between each individual and me. It lasted approximately one hour with a semi-structured and open-ended format (see Appendix C). Prior to the first interview, I practiced with two acquaintances who are international women in similar situations. By doing this, I got valuable feedback on my interviewing skills and gained actual experience on how to guide it. During the process of interviewing, I kept field notes on the interviewee's nonverbal responses which would be part of the whole picture of understanding the interviews (Doyle, 2001). In those two months, the interviewees were also encouraged to reflect back in time the feelings about their personal experience and keep reflective journals on related research questions. Nonetheless, only a few pieces of reflections were collected. Finally, the women were gathered together for focus group interview which began with a discussion about the



interview questions and lasted for two hours. Accordingly, the validity of the study is established by confirming meanings with the interviewees. Besides, communication about personal needs enlightened those who did not have a strong feeling of it. All interviews were recorded and the tapes were transcribed, except that the first part of the focus group was lost due to a technical mistake. Instead, notes on the missing portion was reflected on immediately and recorded.

### **Data Analysis**

This project explores international women's perspectives on the ESL service of Memorial University of Newfoundland and their needs in developing their English skills. It is a qualitative case study. The qualitative approach of data analysis is applicable to interpret the meanings of the data.

As Crewell (1998) recommended, I started with a "general review of all information" (p. 140). I took reflective notes while listening to the interview tapes and reading through the field notes and the journals. A sense of the whole helped me develop an understanding of the context and highlight certain information. The next step was to sort out data by generating codes and categories and getting rid of useless information (Wolcott, as cited in Creswell, 1998). Finally, with the vast amount of data from multiple sources, Ethnograph 5.0 was used to count the data, cluster the codes, and look for emerging themes.

**Ethical Considerations**

A letter of consent (see Appendix B) was sent to the participants with the questionnaire and their signatures were collected. Besides all the procedures of the study involving them, they were informed that their participation in this study is voluntary. It was promised that all information gathered during this study would be confidential and their identity would be protected by the use of pseudonyms. Questionnaires, interview transcriptions, journals, and notes would be destroyed upon the completion of this study. The research results would be shared with them and concerned authorities would be contacted when they feel uncomfortable or insecure.

**Limitations of the study**

The sample group are eight international women visiting St. John's who were available for the study at that time. Their backgrounds were not as diverse as originally intended, which limited the generalization of the findings to a wider ethnic groups and universities at other places. Moreover, the study is focused on those women's perspectives of MUN's ESL services and their learning needs. It may not be applied to the similar group at different settings. Finally, as interpretation of data will be influenced by my personal views, others who may do the same study may come up with different findings.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Discussion**

### **Introduction**

Eight international women were invited and willing to participate in my study of their experience and needs as both wives of international students and ESL learners. Five of them were from East Asia, two from West Asia and one from East Europe. Their nationality is not mentioned here in order not to reveal their identity. Their ages ranged from 25 to 40 and five of them were mothers. All the women had their Bachelor's degree, and one Celia, had already been accepted into a graduate program at MUN one year after she got here. All the others were staying at home since they came, eight months for Nancy, Ruth, Lily, Zoe, and Wendy, one year and half for Joy, and two and a half years for Maggie. Their perception of the current ESL services from the University which mainly includes academic writing, conversation group, conversation partner and academic reading and their expectations of the language learning community were investigated in depth. This inquiry was conducted on four of my major research questions:

- A. In what ways has English fluency or lack of it been influencing the life of these women?
- B. How would these wives of international students evaluate MUN's current ESL service and support to them?
- C. Concerning their own needs in developing English skills, what do they think the university can do to help them?

D. Would an ESL learning community help them? If so, what are their expectations for such a community?

It was found that English played a very important role in these women's lives in Canada. Despite their need of learning English, the ESL service offered to them by the University needed to be improved. An ESL Learning Community built up for them was believed to have the potential to help them learn.

### **Data analysis**

In the following section, each of the research questions will be analyzed and discussed respectively. My findings will be organized according to the emerging themes for the major research questions.

### **Research Question A**

Does English play an essential part of role in the lives of these women here? How important is it to be fluent in English? To what degree their life was affected by their proficiency in English was explored, and four themes were identified. They were: use of English, problems caused by English, confidence and identity, and goals of life in Canada.

#### **Use of English**

Being in this world of English, all the participants reported that they had to use English to some extent. To survive in their new life, they had to have interaction with this society using English, whether they liked it or not, and whether they knew the language

well or not. However, at the same time, they were unbelievably isolated from the English world, and were bounded painfully in their own world of their mother tongue.

None of the women seemed to have regular access to the English world. None of them needed their second language on a daily or even weekly base. However, five of them luckily had access to the Internet and keeping contact with family or a friend elsewhere was their major opportunity to practice English. Despite Wendy's "beginner's level" English, she used instant message with her teenager son who taught her English words in this way now and then. Nancy was lucky to have family who studied English and that enabled her to write a lot. Lily also had someone in her family who knows English. They wrote in both English and her mother tongue, and even tried to have conversations in English. As well, Zoe wrote in both languages to her family, though not very often. However, she had close connection with her friends through email and instant messages totally in English and she said "I learned English from writing." Besides email writing with her family in both languages very often, Ruth also read on the Internet to prepare herself in her future research subject.

As for seeking chances to use English, Nancy seemed to be an exception in the group. With no children to look after yet, she always had her time and freedom to go outside. She made conversations at the bank, at the grocery stores and at the malls. She felt "people here are so nice and they're just there for me" when she needed help. Whenever she got a question, she just asked. It was because she was never turned down or embarrassed. In spite of the time she spent with her friends chatting in her mother tongue, she asked her friends' help with English while shopping together. As well, she

watched TV a lot, and had her husband explain to her words she didn't know from news or movies. When I first interviewed her, she said she didn't listen to the radio at all. However, two months later at the group interview, she told me she had started to do that after our first meeting and felt listening to the radio already worked for her.

A great difference can be seen in Joy's using English in her life during her staying in Newfoundland. Not having studied English for many years, she began her life here with her English at "a rather low level". Her experience with the English language here didn't start nicely. Not being able to make a phone call to get information about snow removal, she had caused her husband to be fined "more than \$100". Despite this, by the time of the interview, she was able to call the landlord when there was a problem with the plumbing. She helped her daughter ask for a librarian's help with researching for her drawing contest. What's more, she kept herself active in learning, such as reading grocery labels and talking with the staff while shopping as well as watching TV and listening to the radio.

I listen more. For example, if I read at home, I turn on the radio. Although I might not be concentrating on listening, the information from the radio keeps stimulating me. After a longer period of time, I would be used to it. Now it's easier for me and I understand more than before.

However, most of them indicated that they had no chance to make communications with others using English. For Maggie, watching TV and listening to the radio were only one-way communications. "I'm just listening, not speaking, everyday!" She said she didn't have the opportunity to use English everyday because "I'm not

involved in anything special.” So, besides listening, she just did some reading of children’s books and English studying, without any two-way communication. Wendy perceived her lack of English practice as due to the fact that she was in the wrong environment --- home. She said this environment didn’t require her to use English. She stayed at home almost all the time and she didn’t need English at all. Unlike Wendy, Ruth didn’t show any dissatisfaction with her environment because she tried her best to keep her home free of English for the sake of her kids. She had a home school of their own language for them and “no English is allowed in the house”. Though she watched TV and read on the Internet sometimes, she didn’t need English everyday. Actually she admitted that she hid herself from the outside world of English for several months because of her fear of not understanding what people talked about. Among all the women, Celia was the only one who had already gone through the “staying at home” stage and had become a graduate student. Before her dream of studying came true, she kept herself at home most of the time for a year and didn’t need to use much English. Only her mother tongue was used between her husband and her, as well as between her family back at home. As well, only the mother tongue would be heard in Lily’s house. Staying at home and trying to study for English exams, she had no opportunity to meet and talk to anybody even in her first language, let alone in English. Even though she said she must “read everyday” and “listen to the tapes” everyday, she felt she didn’t use English everyday. Coming here as a landed immigrant, Zoe hoped she could practise English everyday. Though she realized she needed to speak English everywhere like “the language school, bank, shopping”, her daughter was asked to speak for her to deal with

rather complicated issues, such as to make inquiries for their luggage or to book air tickets.

I had assumed that a job opportunity would open the door to use English now and then. However, Celia and Zoe had different opinions about this. Before Zoe came to Newfoundland, she had a simple job somewhere else in Canada, and felt she had no problem using simple English to communicate with her colleagues. Even though it was a volunteer job that she got in St. John's, she first tried to avoid speaking. However, she soon grew comfortable thanks to her boss's humorous way of chatting with her. However, Celia's effort to make connections with the English world wasn't nicely rewarded. Shortly after she got here, she got a job as a waitress, which she perceived as a chance to use English. Unfortunately, though her English was no problem for her job performance, it built up a wall between her and her co-workers. Communication tool though English language is, it couldn't be used to further a friendship or make personal conversations. Having been "frustrated" with preparing for the right topic for each day to be able to have a light chat with the others, she quit the job with all her "bad feelings".

Despite the fact that these women were all in Canada where English is an official language, they were all in need of making connections to the English world to some degree. For all of them, home was their hiding place from English and some of them chose to hide while some just had no way to get out of there.

#### Problems caused by English

In spite of their various levels of English, all the wives encountered many problems which were caused by language. The common problems identified lie in three



major aspects of their life: speaking and listening, social activities and their mental health. Their difficulty in speaking and listening to English led to inactivity in social events and that further affected them emotionally and mentally.

Everybody claimed that speaking and listening were their biggest problems. They were all frustrated that they did not have chances to have a conversation with others and thus to practise listening and speaking, though they were supposed to be exposed to an English environment. Before the interviews, Lily, Zoe and Joy all joined the reading course to improve their speaking. For TOEFL, Lily had to “read everyday”, but not speaking. She would write rather than speak to others unless she had to because:

there is problem....when I meet someone, I want to tell him one thing, but I don't know how to express well....so I close my mouth. But in fact, I want to talk with him. Because I think, particularly sometimes, I have some enjoy. I want to share my enjoy with someone else (my translation).

For Nancy, her difficulty in speaking was mainly vocabulary.

...Sometimes I face problem to express what I want, and ...I don't know some vocabulary. When I speak native English, like this, twice a week, it'll be very good for me.

Thus, she felt that she needed to spend some time on studying words. Even Maggie, who could speak English relatively well, considered speaking as “the big problem” for her. She explained, “Because, I.... right now, I can understand almost everything but it's hard to use what I am ... what I am listening.” Maggie believed that nothing held her back because it was “.... just to be with somebody and it'll be enough for your language.

Because you are forced to speak when you are with somebody.” In spite of her active learning attitude, she still had not much chance to practise and what she needed for the few chances she had were only simple English words such as greetings.

Moreover, Nancy, Ruth and Joy all experienced difficulties with Newfoundland English and the accent as well as the speed of the language were the main sources of their problem. Having been busy with her kids, Ruth was frustrated about her lack of opportunity to talk with local people. However, Joy was more exposed to the language and felt that she had already got used to it.

Things were extremely hard for Wendy because of her beginners’ level. Not being able to understand others or let others know her thoughts, she chose to stay at home. However, she had a problem even just staying at home since she was not able to answer the door when someone knocked.

Unlike the others, the biggest problem for Zoe was not to understand what people say, but to follow tape-recorded materials. Her headache was that she felt that her listening comprehension was inadequate and thus she was not able to perform well in English proficiency tests such as TOEFL.

Though Celia luckily met the University’s English requirement and became a student, she had been no exception to this problem in speaking and listening. She was in the same boat with the others during her stay at home and was not exposed sufficiently to English in real life, “I don’t use English, quite often, I always felt timid...and shy.” What’s more, this even affected on her study.

This is my problem. Especially for the academic...academic conversation... At first when I involve in the academic talking, and I must use English but I found that my English is limited and I cannot express my idea freely.

Even though most of them were aware that meeting with people and talking in English would help them with their English, they reported little participation in social activities. It seems they were just constrained to their own small space and had not much interaction with others, especially native speakers of English. Celia did not even feel like to go out and meet other students from her home country, let alone local people. Her short period of working experience in the restaurant was so unpleasant that she actually tried to avoid the embarrassment feeling from “not involved in” the conversation with others. And she decided to quit. Ruth had to stay home as well to take care of her family and had no chance for social interactions. She missed her work and her life back in her home country very much.

Things were even worse for Lily. She could not stand the loneliness of being at home speaking to the walls all day and she even cried to her husband and wanted to go back home alone. Maggie also had her feeling of “not being involved in anything.” As the only family on campus from her country, she had no local connection with any one from home. Since everybody around her looked too busy to chat with her, after two and half years in Newfoundland, she did not even get to know her neighbors in the same apartment building.

In the group, Nancy was the only one who was able to meet people usually introduced by her husband and to go out with her friends from her home country. Even

though she talked with her friends in their mother tongue, they had to use English with the others and she found meeting people was really beneficial to her English.

The feeling of not being capable to communicate was a cause of mental health problems for some of them, and all but Joy and Zoe had depression for a certain period of time. For Celia, it was English that caused her depression. She thought it was because she overestimated her level of English before she came here and the frustration came right away after her arrival. For Lily, Nancy, Ruth, Wendy, and Maggie, it was the loneliness that depressed them. They lived in a lonely world with no communication, no connection with others, and their husbands were busy all the time. Moreover, besides the language, the cause for Maggie's depression included the depressing winter weather, and for Ruth's included her staying at home all the time and not being able to go out of her house.

Troubled by those problems caused by language, those wives of international students all experienced some unwillingness to stay with their husbands here in Canada. They did not seem to enjoy this kind of life. They were able to overcome this feeling just for the benefit of their husbands.

#### Confidence and identity

The third influence English had on these women's lives was on their confidence and identity. Confronted by the language and the new life in Newfoundland, they could not help questioning their identity and had to adjust to the new self they felt. At the same time, for most of them, it was a severe strike to their confidence because of the discomfort they had from this process of changing views.

My perception was that they tended to self-rate lower than their apparent English levels, which showed their lack of confidence. Being asked if they could express themselves well in English, nobody answered yes despite their different levels. They all had the tendency to emphasize their weakness in English and ignored their strengths at the same time. For example, though everybody else from the reading course including the instructors considered that Maggie's spoken English was quite fluent, she did not agree,

I cannot express myself and I think this is another reason for being a little bit reserved...when I am speaking. Because...because I am not sure if I'm...correct understand or understood?

Another sign of their lack of confidence was their discomfort with using English. With a background working with native speakers of English, Ruth had a rather advanced level of English and did not expect she would have language problems here at all. However, the difficulty with Newfoundland English let Ruth decide to stay at home thus to be far away from the accent. As a result, she did not feel as "independent and capable" as before. At the beginning, she "was avoiding, for example, to call the superintendent, to come to the house to talk with him." Maggie had the fear of word choice, "In that moment. And in the same time, I am afraid if I want to explain what I am saying...to don't use the wrong words." And Wendy avoided any occasions that English would be used because "...I'm just afraid that I can't follow. Their speed is so fast and I'm slower in responding to others. The two languages don't belong to the same language family and they're so different." Similarly, Joy avoided difficult readings, which was also why she did not continue to participate in the reading course. She said, "If it's too difficult and

need a lot of effort, I would need to think about reading it or not.” Besides, Lily and Zoe mentioned about their fear of being tested in English, reflected also in Zoe’s comment, “You know, I can understand many people speaking English, but I don’t understand the tape.”

Moreover, those women had to re-build their identity as learners, mothers, and wives. First, they all had to accept themselves as not-so-competent learners again even though they all had their academic success and their own careers back in their home countries. Celia was “embarrassed” when what the native speakers of English said could not be understood. At first she did not have the courage to even admit this because of the thought that she had acquired advanced skills in English. And Maggie always reminded herself that she had to “be careful” when she spoke because “you are not a good speaker. And you can say something that it’s ...not correct....” Although everybody agreed with Ruth that “to feel comfortable and you’ll learn more”, it seems that nobody found this comfort in their learning except Nancy who felt “...I can ask anybody what’s you call this, what’s you call this...yeah...no problem.” Moreover, Lily also talked about her parents’ worry about her giving up her decent job at home and coming to Canada when she had no preparation for English. She herself was also uncertain about her new role as a learner again. As well as Lily, Wendy also “didn’t realize English would be so important” before she came. She found it “hard” to pick up the language that she “gave up” many years ago. Joy experienced the same hardship to regain the language skills that had been lost, but she seemed to have found her way of learning, as she said, “if I read at home, I turn on the radio. Although I might not be concentrating on listening, the information

from the radio keeps stimulating me....” However, when English tests were concerned, she said, “I still feel that I don't know enough. My level is still too low and it's hard for me to do it.”

Second, all of them but Lily and Nancy were proud mothers. In this new environment, this period of transition from their mother tongue to English also had an effect on their identity as mothers. It was hard for a mother to feel that she was not able to help her kids. Ruth talked about her feeling of being incapable when her kids “got home from daycare and cried to her” because of the new language. Maggie was nervous about going to her child’s school “for an interview.” She did not want to “put him in a bad position. Like...like having a mother that cannot speak good English” and this also made her hesitate in volunteering for that school even though she was a teacher with lots of experience. Besides, she also had to learn to “speak with him” and encourage him when “the other children make fun of” her child’s English. It was even harder for Joy to have a child who got used to spoken English faster than her. For a while, Joy lost the child’s respect for her as a mother and she studied very hard to gain what she deserved back. At the same time, the mothers were also very concerned that their children would lose their own language and culture. For example, Ruth built up a “home school” for her mother tongue and English was not permitted in their house because she wanted her children “to go with both” languages. Zoe also needed to be at home and help her child with homework after school, as she was trying to keep the evening time a priority for her English study.

Finally, as wives, those women all had struggles with their status. They all had busy husbands but none had a social life themselves. Having lost their independent social status, almost everybody expressed her loneliness as a wife and they all agreed with what Ruth said,

...But as wives of international students, when we came, we feel lonely....

really, we feel lonely. And this is one point that tell you that, I don't want to learn English, I feel lonely, I don't like this country, I want to go back to my home country.

It was not easy for them to accept their new roles as stay-at-home supporters and dependents to their husbands. They were unhappy about this and were seeking ways to help themselves out. As one of them pointed out,

I did not leave my work and our country to stay here for one year and then to leave. But really, that... I'm not happy we have to stay. We have to stay but we have to solve the problem.... because of this, I'm going to the university and hopefully I can join it.

Generally, English was a big challenge to those women's confidence and self-identity. They needed encouragement from others to reassure them of the strength they had or the progress they were making individually. They were also in the stage of getting used to the changing self.

#### Goals of their life in Canada

Though all the wives came initially to accompany their husbands, they built up their own personal goals to reach at the same time. Most mentioned study, and some



mentioned experience and jobs. However, the achievement of these goals was to some degree affected by their English.

The women in this study all had their Bachelor's degree and all but one expressed their willingness to further their education despite their background differences. For example, Lily, who came here on her honeymoon, started to prepare for TOEFL right after she got here. It was a challenge as well as a dream for her to continue to do her Master's degree here.

Maggie's goal was totally different from that of the others. She "did not come here to stay" and she "took it like going to another place, like experience." She just wanted to experience the life and "have a good time ...here, to make friends, to speak, to do something like that, but ... nothing else." However, having no connection with this world, it was even harder to realize and Maggie did not find it easy to enjoy her visiting here in Canada.

Being asked about work, they all said they had learned it was hard to get a job here. In addition, everybody anticipated problems relating to language communication, no matter whether they had that experience already. Celia shared her embarrassment and difficulty at work facing the communication gap with the others. On hearing that, Ruth joked "I could make it blocked in working here", and she as well as Joy and Lily simply thought if they worked, communications with others would be problematic. Maggie even applied for a part-time job which needed to use English a lot because she believed, "...when I work or when I study, my English will improve faster and faster." But she did not hear anything back from her interview and assumed it was English which prevented

her from getting that job. Nancy had the same experience in applying for a position in her field of study. Although Zoe had a rather pleasant job and enjoyed that experience somewhere else in Canada, she had difficult moments chatting with her boss here in Newfoundland. As for Wendy, who had beginner's level of English, she would not "thought about that"--- to work using English at all.

Coming to Canada with their own expectations, those educated women all intended to have their own achievements besides reunion with their husbands. They wanted to either study or work except for Maggie who had planned only to enjoy the life here. Constrained by their English, Celia and Nancy had to change their minds about working here in Canada, and the others were still struggling.

### **Research Question B**

In these women's case, how can the University's ESL service help them? What were their perceptions of the service they experience? Did they find that indeed helpful? What can be improved about the service? These questions were asked concerning the women's evaluation of the current ESL service available to them as spouses of international students. Three themes were identified in this section and they were: information, participation, and limitations.

#### **Information**

Information about the University's ESL service to the spouses should have reached them in some way. Surprisingly, lack of information was found in common

among these women. As well, some of them were not even clear about the meaning of ESL service.

With all of the international students whose first languages are not English contacting the ESL Center upon arrival, they are all added to the ESL emailing list. Normally, news concerning the service goes to the listserv and everybody, including those women's husbands, gets it. However, some, like Lily and Zoe, claimed that was the first time they heard the university even had some free service for them. Despite the fact that both of them took part in the reading group and the conversation group, they did not know those two groups were part of the service offered to them.

Not only were the wives unaware of the service, some of them had received wrong information, such as Celia, Maggie, and Wendy. Celia recalled, "... And many friends introduced this to me and encouraged me try to attend this kind of lessons ... my husband said, 'oh, this kind of lessons just provide for the students' ...." Similarly, Wendy was so sure that "there is no help available at the university..." and it was because "I asked about it. My husband told me there was nothing there for me." Maggie was not that clear about where she got the wrong impression.

I did not know about that. I thought maybe it was just for... or maybe I was reading that one. But ... I thought maybe it was just for somebody who ... is attending university, something like that. You know, maybe both of them are doing something here. Not like my case...

But the true reason was, "It's hard for me because...having this status here, like a visitor here. To go to something you don't deserve. This was in my mind."

Moreover, some of them had indeed received the information, but either incomplete or delayed. Nancy attended the writing course with her husband, but she said, “Really I don’t know about this conversation group...”. She was surprised to know about the conversation group of which she was in need. So was Wendy who had only heard about the reading course recently. Luckily, Joy seemed to have established direct personal contact with the Center. However, she still complained that “...it seems to me that the university does not have a system about releasing this kind of information.” So, she was not informed all the time.

In addition, when asked about the ESL service, some women did not actually know what was referred to. Several of them mistook it as the English-as-a-Second Language program for international students. Zoe mentioned “I like to have an ESL program...” but she had the impression that “their program very ... very expensive, really?” Lily and Celia gave the same response to the question “Have you tried any of the ESL service?” and said they did not need it because they did not come to study English as a second language as their major.

In all, not all the women were able to get complete and accurate information about the current ESL service. In addition to the availability of the services, they also needed to be informed about what the service is and for whom it is.

### Participation

Five of the women had their involvement in the service available: academic writing course, reading group, conversation group, and conversation partner. Generally,

they all had a positive impression of what they experienced. However, “they all felt that they needed more (from my field notes).”

Although both Joy and Nancy were once regular attendants of the writing course, their feelings toward it were not the same. Nancy really enjoyed taking part in that course. From that experience, she learned not only writing, but also speaking. She considered attending the course as an opportunity to speak English with the teacher and the other international students. Her comment about that experience was, “I learned a lot from the writing course and liked the interaction with the teacher the best.” However, Joy had mixed feelings from this experience. It was of some help for her on one hand, on the other hand, she felt it was a great challenge that she was unable to face because it was not appropriate for her English level.

...because the first course I took, the writing course, was for students. They've passed TOEFL, and their English was on a certain level but not perfect yet. That course was for them. But my English level was very low at that time. I felt very hard to follow that. That was not for beginners and you have to be a certain level to catch up.

On the contrary, Joy found the reading group more appropriate for her. She said, “I felt good about that one because that was my level. I was not quite on that level and it was a little bit high for me, but not too high. So felt not hard....” It was still challenging and at the same time not boring because of the proper level of difficulty for her. Thus, she felt she was getting the most out of it.

I reviewed those that were learned from the group, and I felt the materials were so good. When the first time they were discussed, I understood some but there were things that I didn't quite catch. But I felt so good when I read them for the second time.

As a slow reader, what Zoe got from the reading group meant a lot to her. She wasn't able to tolerate any longer readings before, but participating in that group enabled her to start reading the newspaper with the reading skills she acquired. Lily was taking a break from her test preparation when she joined that group and found it useful. It helped not only her reading, but also her speaking. She was not afraid to open her mouth and talk in English any more. She was pleased, "...I can meet some friends, when they talk some topics, and I can practise my listening and spoken English, I think it's... it really helped me. Yes."

As well, Maggie was active in the group and enjoyed being there. However, she wasn't quite sure about her own competence and thought it was "a little bit high" for people like herself "who are not having enough notion of English language."

No one else except Zoe participated in the conversation group every week when it was organized. And that involvement was impressive for Zoe. "What she liked most was that the leader didn't slow down, which gave her more confidence in catching up what local people said (from my field notes)." It was authentic language rather than classroom language that the group leader used, and that worked for Zoe who needed this kind of training and exposure to Newfoundland English which she found hard to follow. As she explained, "They don't like other ESL teachers, speak very slow..." and she liked to

“...practise the normal speed.” Lily also dropped by that group once but only found it too small for triggering any interesting discussions.

Despite Celia’s strong desire to improve her English, she was not involved in any of these groups and she did not think there was a particular reason for her nonparticipation. However, one thing she indeed wanted was to have a conversation partner because she “tried to improve my speaking and listening...ability.” However, there was no student volunteer available at that time and she never got one.

Similarly, Ruth had no experience with any of the service. As well, it was not because she did not want to, but because “the time is not suitable.” With her kids to look after, it was impossible for her to make that time for the conversation group during the middle of a day. However, for Wendy, she herself decided not to attend the service because nothing was there for beginner learners. She said, “If there is something appropriate for me, sure I would go and try. Because that's not proper for me, it would be just a waste of time if I go.”

The women who participated in the ESL service found it helpful to their language learning. However, certain services were not available at certain times, which was why some of them were not involved.

### Limitations

Despite the great help those who utilized the service had already got, they also expressed their concerns about how they could be served better. They would like to have the information problem about the service solved, to have the service designed for them,

to have service available when needed, to have meeting times appropriate for them, and to have more choices of service.

Above all, a reliable way to provide information concerning the ESL service was requested by them. For example, Lily and Zoe were quite surprised when the service was discussed. Zoe was looking for something like this when she arrived, and was not told about this free service but only about the Intensive Course for ESL students which was not what she wanted. Celia and Wendy were given the wrong information by their husbands. As was detailed in the first theme of this section, there was a problem delivering this important information to the spouses. Thus, the wives mentioned that they need to be informed about the service early and accurately. Particularly, Joy recommended there should be an “information system” which would make sure everyone would be reached.

Generally, four kinds of ESL service were available to the spouses. Actually, three of them, academic writing, conversation group, and conversation partner, were originally intended to help the international students rather than their spouses. This was why Joy had the feeling that academic writing was “too high” for her. Even though it was a helpful learning opportunity according to Nancy, she did not feel the same way. Frustrated by not being able to catch up with the others, she stopped going to that group. As well, Wendy was waiting for something that was for her level, as a beginner, which did not exist. Thus, the women were very concerned whether something that was just for them would be provided.



A conversation partner is supposed to help ESL learners to practise spoken English. However, when Celia needed a partner, there was no student volunteer to help her. It was disappointing to her that “the conversational partner is not available now, because the volunteer is limited.” And the same thing happened to Lily who asked for a conversational partner but “don’t have for a long time”. Speaking was one of the major problems those women encountered with English, and everybody expressed their interest in having a conversation partner. With the small number of volunteers, certainly, their needs cannot be met.

Moreover, another difficulty for those women was the time some services were offered, such as the conversation group. Having a family, especially children, to take care of, they found it difficult to give priority to studying over their responsibility at home. Ruth was seeking every chance to speak English; however, she felt it was such a pity that she couldn’t go to the conversation group because “The time...is not suitable...” for her. Even Nancy was busy helping her husband with his exam, and so she did not “have free time” to participate in some services offered. Considerations should be given to choosing meeting times that would make it easy for the spouses to participate and to providing childcare as part of the service.

Finally, being asked if the current service was sufficient, all the women in the focus group expressed their needs for a variety of ESL service to be offered by the University. What the University provided was far from enough and they would like to have more programs which they could choose according to their own needs. Joy mentioned, “The University is capable, but the chances are too few. For example, to offer

a course or to organize a group, but there isn't much chance like this.” Even the only four kinds of service currently available were not offered regularly every semester, which was not encouraging for their participation. There was a time Nancy was too busy to join any service, but when she was finally available, no service was available. Therefore, the wives needed more choices of the service to be there for them.

These women voiced their opinions on how to improve the current ESL service. Generally, the current service was not sufficient for them and they needed more services designed for them with considerations of their particular individual needs.

### **Research Question C**

What needs do these women have concerning their English learning? What kinds of efforts have they made? In what way can the University help them? The learning needs of these women, their own learning strategies and their expectation of help from the University were explored.

#### **Needs**

All the women felt that they needed to improve their English. As adult learners, all of them were very clear about their own particular needs in developing their English skills. As it was mentioned in Research Question A, all of the women experienced problems mostly in speaking and listening. As well, whether they were beginners or not, these two areas were also what they needed most in developing their English language skills, which was confirmed by all in the group interview. In addition to these, some individual needs were also touched upon.

Maggie, Ruth, Lily, Celia, Nancy and Joy expressed themselves well during the interviews, but all stressed the need for more practice in speaking. For instance, Nancy was always looking for a little bit more chat with the others rather than simple greetings but not much occasion were available. Staying at home almost all the time, Ruth was scared that she would lose the skills she had acquired and she said, “Even for vocabulary, we have the vocabulary, you know, but for the accent, and the way they're talking, and the way we have to reply, I need... I think I need ...I need more.”

Moreover, Joy addressed her need to improve reading and also considered this as a way to learn to listen, to speak, and even to write.

... actually, I need to improve my reading. I think, if I read a lot, and my listening would be improved as well. So will writing. Because if you read more, you'll know the expressions for certain things, how people write it. Also English thinking is different from ... so you'll learn the difference [from reading]. Then you'll know how to use the expression, how to think in English.

She was able to figure out the connection between these language skills and the necessity for her to develop them simultaneously. Treating them as a whole, she recognized which part was her weakness.

Wendy frankly said she needed everything considering herself as a beginner learner. She was not satisfied with the slow progress she made in learning and felt speaking was more challenging to her than reading. She said, “Even if I cannot speak, I can read now.” However, she felt that she did not have a good learning environment with only people of the same mother tongue around.

Zoe was the only one who wanted specific help with test taking. As she pointed out, she had difficulty following conversations on tapes or dealing with long reading. She acknowledged that, “But I, my situation, I, no, I want to pass the exam. I think it's different.” To write TOEFL, the required English language test for her to pass in order to go back to school, she had to do both listening and reading comprehension. Although Celia and Lily prepared for TOEFL as well, they preferred to practise a lot by themselves and did not have the same special needs.

Speaking and listening were the skills these women felt they mostly needed to develop. Their individual learning needs were identified as well and needs in reading, learning environment, and test taking were pointed out.

#### Help seeking and other strategies

Though the women were in need of help with their English, only Nancy and Joy felt comfortable in seeking help from other people or the University. This does not mean that the women made no effort to learn. They all had their own methods but that did not guarantee effectiveness.

Bothered by her depression, Celia was not active in seeking help through connections from the University. She “just stayed at home to just to try to pass the test.” Thus, listening to tapes and writing sample TOEFL tests were her preparation for meeting the English requirements for university admission. Actually, she did get helped by the ESL Center because she mentioned, “I...borrow some listening comprehension material and try to listen to...listen to the tape. And I borrowed some TOEFL...TOEFL examination test. That is the listening part. So I practiced and try to...try to...[pass the

test].” As well, Cecilia listened to news on the radio and watched TV programs hoping this would help her spoken English.

Lily came without any preparation for the language. During this study, Lily was spending most of her time studying on her own for English exams, TOEFL and GMAT, which were required for her admission to the University. Her strategies were to practise writing the samples a lot. As well, she found some CBC TV programs very interesting and helpful to her English, such as “Canadian History”. She was also trying to have more speaking, “Sometimes, I talk with some international students, but if I ... if we're familiar with each other. I talk with them. I'm unfamiliar with most of people. So ... what I ... that I can conversation with others is only a few.” Although she studied on her own, she wished she would get some help from the University. What was holding her back was her doubt, “I always think if I do it, are they glad to ... conversation...[to help]?” She was so afraid to bother people that she did not even ask what was there for her.

Maggie had similar thoughts. However, she was very assured that she should not bother the others because “...having this status here, like a visitor here. To go to something you don't deserve. This was in my mind.” Thus, she did not expect to be helped by the University. Instead, she spent a lot of time on reading and watching TV. And she made phone calls in English when needed and her strategy to get rid of her nervousness was: “before calling I have in my mind everything I want to say or ask ...it is like preparing.” To improve her speaking, she learned from her experience that she should “say something short and simple”. She considered helping her son with his

homework and going to the bank as opportunity to speak. She also found a church she liked, joined their choir and took the chance to speak with the others there.

Being challenged by Newfoundland English upon her arrival, Ruth did not think of being helped by others. She chose to hide from it and stayed at home almost all the time avoiding using English instead. However, she was encouraged by the progress a friend of her made and started to “force” herself to use English. “...for example, to call the superintendent, to come to the house to talk with him.” She felt that she should be able to catch up with her friend and started to seek chance to communicate in English.

Although Wendy thought she needed a lot of help with her English, never did she go to the University asking for help. This was simply because of what her husband told her and she said, “I asked about it. My husband told me there was nothing there for me.” Besides, due to her status as a temporary visitor, she could not go to the New Canadians Association for free English courses either, as advised by her friend. So she sighed, “...I have nowhere to go.” She was just following some English textbooks and tapes, which she found not very efficient, “...sometime I don't feel this way right. For example, pronunciation. I can follow the phonetic symbols to make the sound but I don't think my pronunciation is as same as the others.” Instead, she learned words from her teenager son who was still in her home country via chatting on the Internet. She was quite happy about that, “If I learn some words, I would write them to him. If I got it wrong, he would point that out immediately. He told me, that's not right and it should be like this or that.” She also read, newspaper ads and flyers, which worked for her to build some useful and simple vocabulary.

Different from Celia, Lily, Maggie, Ruth, and Wendy, Zoe tried to seek help from the University. However, for some unknown reason, she was only introduced to the Intensive ESL Program which she found too expensive to attend. Zoe was trying to build her test-taking skills on her own and there was no way but practice. She was just writing test samples and commented, "I think it's kind of skill for me. I think that's helpful. Can be."

Nancy was much more open-minded in help seeking. She did not feel shy asking for assistance during shopping at the grocery store or at the malls. Besides, she also had a lot of interactions with the teacher and other international students from the academic writing course, trying to get the most out of that ESL service. If there was something that she did not know, she would just ask and that was her way of making the opportunity to practise English. Moreover, Nancy watched TV programs and took pleasure in movies she rented, which she found very helpful. After our first meeting, she spent more time listening to the radio and felt that was beneficial too.

Joy was quite active in looking for support from the ESL Center which proved to be very helpful to her. She felt she learned a lot from the help she got. She worked hard on building up her reading skills and learning strategies while attending the academic reading group. What she had learned enabled her to study on her own. As she explained,

But now my ability of self-studying is developed, if I'm at home, I can still learn from newspaper, from reading. I can still improve a lot by myself. But, it's language learning so I need to communicate with local people. I need to learn

from conversations. So I still need to go out to seek chances. Now I feel my English is being improved....

Thus, at home, she read and studied words, and she listened to the radio while doing chores. When she went out, she initiated chat with local people, but only in a simple way.

Despite the important role help seeking plays in learning, these women were not active in asking for support from the University. Instead, they were struggling with their own learning strategies, which was not only a slow but unfruitful process.

#### Help from MUN

As the only connection in this foreign country for these women, the University was expected to care about their well-being and needs. And their individual needs with English skills were focused on speaking practice, language training courses or programs with the consideration of individual needs. Help in these areas was requested by the women and confirmed by the focus group.

First of all, all the international women agreed in the focus group that they would need some help from the University with their language learning. They all agreed to the comment one of them made on learning on her own and argued that was neither enough nor what they preferred.

...I'm staying from working at home. Without working, without doing anything. And to go the mall, this is not effective every time. To go every time to the supermarket, to the mall. But you'll learn, you will not learn in a way that you want.



Support from the University would have facilitated their learning. With support, learning would occur not only more effectively but also more efficiently. As Wendy pointed out,

It takes a while for us to make progress. But it's so slow for us to just stay at home and learn on our own. It's better and faster if we learn it with a teacher at school.

The teacher talks and I can learn from that. I can also learn words and how to use them from that. It'll be faster.

Joy also believed that the University had the capability to help them by offering English courses for different purpose. She pointed out that the University could simply make its current teaching resources and language experts available to the spouses.

On discussing what specific help they needed from the University individually, they touched upon practicing speaking with others as well as native English speakers, and training according to personal needs. What Lily needed from the University were chances for her to speak English. She appreciated that she could both read and discuss in English in the reading group, but would need more opportunity like that.

... I need chance to conversation with others. But you know, if I'm in the street, I meet someone, I don't ... I think I'd better not to talk with others people. If, for example, if in class, and like reading course, we talk some topic, I think I need this chance.

As well, Nancy had the same need, the chance to speak English. Although she had no problem with seeking help even from strangers and chatting with the others in English, she did not feel that she was able to develop her conversation skills in depth this way.

What she wanted was genuine English and to practise speaking with native speakers of English.

But we have to speak with someone native [speaker of English]. Not with each other. You know international spouse, the spouse for international students here has already not known English, cannot speak fluently. So we have to speak with someone native.

However, Joy would like even more. She talked of the hardship for her to study English on her own as a newcomer and thought that something from the University would help. “For example, to offer a course or to organize a group, but there isn't much chance like this.” Moreover, this help should have its own system. As she explained,

From an educational point of view, a course for student at a certain level (would have helped me). If I take a course like this, I would have felt my effort to improve my English was efficient. But I didn't have this chance and I just relied on my self-study, so sometimes I didn't complete what I planned. I couldn't.

Although it was beyond Maggie's expectation that the University would endeavor to help her, she was indeed “waiting for something”. On talking about the possible help she would like to have, she mentioned the consideration of individual needs and the motivation to enjoy the learning process.

I don't know. I mean it'll be a ...in my opinion, it'll be a good course that can get together a couple of themes somebody may need here. I mean, just to start with simple things and then to see everyday the...the progress.”

When the focus group was facilitated, these women expressed their interest in meeting with native speakers, training in listening, as well as a children's program. It was agreed by the whole group that they were pretty isolated from others, especially native English speakers, which was doing no good to their language learning. Thus, they would like the University to arrange regular occasions for this kind of meeting.

They have to make more... not just at one time meeting or conversation with native people. Because not all international wives have the same time. They have their conscious at home so they have to make it at a different time...

Not only meeting others to speak English was necessary for them, but they also needed a course focusing on listening. In order to acquire the essential listening skills, they realized they would need to be instructed in a proper way. As one of them detailed, "...Like have some class for just listening. And then ask questions about what you listen and what you hear. And that's very important." What's more, to have those busy mothers to be available for those opportunities, they mentioned the need of a children's program. All but one in the group had concerns about their children while thinking of their own knowledge gain and all agreed with what one of them put forward, "a program for children is very important too."

Additionally, one of them proposed that the University should offer a spouse program as compulsory. It was due to her worry that taking care of the family would have priority over a program which would be beneficial for them. However, "...if they have fixed program, at the beginning, when he's coming, he knows that his wife is going to university also, to have a special program. And he has to arrange for this as a spouse to

manage this.” She needed some time herself to be freed from her responsibility at home and to do what she liked. However, she had been missing chances to learn because she always had the freedom to choose while her husband did not. She hoped that help from outside of her house would make a difference. Thus, a compulsory program would gain support from their husbands for them, which the University could do as an educational authority.

These women had their voice heard about how the university could help them. They asked for practising and learning opportunities which they were not able to find themselves.

#### **Research Question D**

When the wives were introduced to the idea of an ESL Learning Community, their expectations of this community were also investigated. Generally, issues concerning perceptions of such a community, achievements from joining it, themes to learn, and teaching styles were discussed.

##### **Perceptions of the ESLLC concept**

All of the wives liked the idea of meeting people, especially those who had something in common with them. Thus, these women perceived the ESLLC as the connection with other international spouses. Celia thought it was “necessary” for her because “...we can get to know [each other], and we can encourage ourselves and each other....” And one of them made a similar comment in the focus group:

To make meetings...this is very very important. And this will give us a chance for us as wives of international students to choose, for example, friends, or making groups and making meetings.... this will encourage us through our [communication].

And for Maggie, it was “a good idea to have them together” and her wish was “just to be with somebody” in the community because this gave her the feeling of being “part of something.” Zoe already had her connection with other international women in her language school and felt good to have communication with them. She appreciated that the ESLLC would also have this as a very important component.

Moreover, the ESLLC was also viewed as having the potential to build up group connections among the women and this would be a dynamic way of learning. For example, Celia compared this with one-on-one tutoring, and felt that “group conversation is more active than the face to face...one-on-one conversation. And you can get to know what others think about the issues and...what the others interest.” For Wendy, “It’s no fun to learn on my own.” Nancy also “preferred to learn with others” to studying on her own. It was because “It should be courage, encourage ...they’ll encourage me. It’ll be good conditions for knowing others and know how they speak....”

Also, it would be easy and interesting for them to learn about people from different cultures. As Ruth thought, “we’re sitting together and talking, I will hear more about [you] people, and you’ll hear more about me. We will have this opportunity for talking, even without a teacher....”

The women believed that the ESLLC would gather the spouses of international students together. Thus they would not only have communications in English but also learn about each other.

#### Achievements from joining the ESLLC

First of all, they all agreed that joining a learning community would facilitate their language learning. It would create a learning environment which would be helpful to adult learners. As Joy pointed out,

...this environment would be good for me. I think I'm not the only one that needs to improve English. If everybody gets together, everybody learns better. The motivation to learn would be stimulated and one would be more willing to study.

So, to everyone, English might be improved more efficiently.

Also, Maggie believed it would prepare them to learn whether they were beginning learners or not. There they would find out that they were not alone struggling at their English level. Thus,

... even if you don't know the language very well, you can find people from your level, with the same English level when you go...to some places like that or some meetings like that. You can try to speak with them. Just for a couple of minute.

Thus, the spouses would feel relaxed with no peer pressure from others with the same needs. And this can enhance learning.

Wendy was more concerned about her improvement on “the correct pronunciations and the right speed” which she thought would become possible through practicing with a group of people with diverse backgrounds. And Zoe took more

considerations into the difference in individual learning needs which could be met with various kinds of service offered by the ESLLC. They would be able to choose and learn what they needed.

Furthermore, the wives felt they could get support from each other from meeting in the community. Talking with the others about problems they met, they would feel “motivated by this kind of conversation”, as Celia suggested. Actually, during the focus group, they showed great support to Nancy who had just learned that she was pregnant by sharing her excitement and their own experience.

Moreover, it was the communication with the others that all of them felt need of most. Not being “exposed to this world” although they were living in it, they had to fight against their feeling of being lost. Maggie enjoyed meeting with other international students and their families, although there were few such opportunities. Talking about this need for communication, she said, “...Because I'm a very open person. It's hard being like that, to stay alone.” Celia, Lily, and Nancy all expressed similar feelings in the focus group,

this [staying at home] will really make the depression. All of the wives will stay at home, cooking... [The others: suffer...] and only she will only find a friend that she's talking in the same language. You know, she will search for a friend that she is talking for communication. She needs someone to communicate.

Thus, Ruth believed the community would “give me a chance to join the people, to contact other people” and “this is very important...” Wendy also preferred to be in a

group rather than being on her own because “When there is a group, people can also have some communication besides learning.”

This learning community would serve as a chance for them to make friends with others. Despite the fact that there was currently no chance for her to establish friendships with people here and being far away from her friends at home, Maggie felt the need to make new friends, which she thought would be met in the community. “John [Maggie’s husband] doesn’t have any friends and I don’t have any friends. And I want to go somewhere, to meet somebody, do something that I didn’t....” Wendy and Nancy had the same expectation as the latter indicated,

...But that university cannot offer us something like that to make a friendship or...to other spouses. But if we meet each other at this conversation group and it’ll be regular, I think this will help us to make friendship with them. With some other spouses.

While they would be learning the language, they would also be sharing knowledge from each other. Getting to know people from other countries and about other cultures was considered to be a valuable learning chance by Ruth.

...As the wives of international, they will come and unite themselves. This will open the life for them to go and see people, and to know the culture of the other people, for example. This is very important. Euh... and she’ll gain herself something.

For Wendy and Zoe, the purpose of learning together was not only language development, but also gaining knowledge from others. It was learning from each other



and “sharing information”. As a matter of fact, this was already proved by these women’s experience in the focus group. With an Islamic woman in her veil sitting with them, the meaning and the usage of veils in her culture were explored by those curious learners. All of them seemed to have enjoyed meeting each other in the focus group, especially Lily who suggested in the middle of the interview “so after our meeting, we can leave our telephone [numbers] to each other.”

In all, the ESLLC was perceived to have great potentials in several aspects. The women believed: they would learn English better in the fear free learning environment; they would have friendship in this supportive group; and they would gain knowledge from each other.

#### Themes to learn

Most of the women had interests in common --- cultural and historical issues, and would like these to be explored in the learning community. Celia thought this should be done with the help of a native speaker of English and this knowledge was necessary because “they can solve some problem, such as when can we ask this kind of question? And what kind of express is more standard.” This would also enable the wives to “connect this kind of information to our conversation and to our English learning.” Lily had her particular reason to learn about “Canadian history and Newfoundland history”. She was planning to immigrate to this country and was interested in knowing more about “Canada history, and custom, culture, Canada culture...”. And the group had a discussion about their experience with how false the media could be and proposed a better way to

learn about culture, “.... we will teach about another culture, and another people.” They believed this would help them to learn the truth.

A guided tour of the city was also suggested by the group. “Maybe for the new international student's wives, they need to go with a group to see the area.” It was a pity for many of them who had already been stayed here for a while but had not had a chance for some outings. The group agreed a group tour would be helpful and enjoyable for the wives who “came from another foreign culture”, “has different language” and were “afraid to go outside.”

Only with the company and the knowledge of local people would they be able to enjoy the anecdotes or tales of this place with its cultural particularity. As the women claimed, “So we need to some guide to enter the local living, the local life, the native life here.”

Both Ruth and Nancy were impressed by the help with their language they got from the Internet. Thus, Nancy recommended teaching the spouses how to use the Internet as a learning tool. As she detailed, “How to chat by the Internet in English. How to look for something in English from Internet.” English was still the predominant language used on the Internet thus Nancy thought the spouses should take advantage of it.

Valuable input was given by these intelligent women. There were other suggestions, such as doing things together and problem-solving assistance. Maggie pointed out the importance of being together and sharing experience with other women and she suggested doing “different things” together with the others because “you can learn a new language by doing different things. Like sharing something with somebody

about your culture, about your way of thinking, and things. About everything.” As well, Celia suggested a counseling service would be able to help the women out in critical situations when accurate expressions of themselves would make a difference in their life. For instance, “...when we go see the doctor, we feel not convenient because sometime we cannot describe our symptom to the doctor correctly.”

Generally, a number of themes for the ESLLC were suggested. They included cultural and historical knowledge of Newfoundland and Canada, outings in the city, learning English using the Internet, doing things together, and problem-solving assistance.

### Teaching Styles

According to their own characteristics as learners, some women preferred an informal learning style while some believed formal teaching would be necessary sometimes.

Women from countries where the communicative approach in language teaching was not applied expressed needs for informal teaching. Having been a teacher, Celia observed that students from her country were fed up with lectures and other forms of formal teaching. A formal setting was seen as an obstacle to their language learning because they were afraid of making mistakes. And she felt the same. Thus, she suggested, “...talking informally, they can exchange their ideas more freely and they can ...they can talk to each other and try to ... encourage each other and they can further the conversation freely.”

According to Joy and Maggie, another advantage of informal teaching was the learners’ reduced reliance on instructors. Instead of simply taking what was input by

instructors, they had to take their own responsibility of learning with the instructors' facilitating. Joy believed the proper style would

... let the learners play a dynamic role in their own learning. That'll help with the efficiency of learning. To learning English, one cannot just rely on their others.

It's not like the teacher gives and one takes. One has to learn actively. So, one has to seek for the appropriate ways of learning of oneself and learn by oneself.

As well, Maggie agreed with the importance of learners' participation in learning. She emphasized that each of them should be involved, should have their own contribution to their learning, but "not to have a teacher in front of you". For example, "We don't know a new word without a dictionary, everybody try to find the meaning for that word. I'm saying, the other one say...finally we'll put together the expression." She enjoyed this process of exploring with the other learners instead of being told by an instructor.

Moreover, conversational English worried them greatly. When they arrived, most of them felt terrible about the English they had learned to speak in their home country. It just did not sound right. They believed the solution to this problem would be "meeting with the local people, because we must catch the informal way of the local people speaking. Such as slang and colloquial...." And the reason according to one woman was "... we are not familiar with this kind of expression."

Some of them believed that a combination of formal and informal teaching would help them most. For example, although Nancy felt she needed verbal communication with the others more than grammar and exercises, she realized those who would like to go back to school might have different opinions. Ruth also considered the difference in

occurrence of learning of individuals and pointed out some people would need to be taught in a formal way, "... if they have their ability to go and visit and speak English everywhere, she wants to learn by this, they will. But some people, they will not learn by this...."

Both Wendy and Ruth talked about their preference for structured learning in which teaching materials were carefully chosen and "Teachers have their plans, like to teach some words or a few sentences each time." Furthermore, one of them even mentioned that evaluations should be administered regularly to let the learners be aware of their own level of English proficiency and how much progress they made. Nancy and Celia also suggested assignments should be given between the times of their meetings, to help the learners continue their efforts to study.

Advantages of formal and informal teaching were discussed respectively by the women. An approach combining both teaching styles was also suggested by some of them.

## **Discussion**

In this section, the results of the study are summarized and discussed with the focus on the four research questions of this study.

Research question A: In what ways has English fluency been influencing the life of those wives?

Obviously, English had a great influence on these women's lives. The joy from reuniting with their family was mixed up with isolation, frustration with the language, and rejection of their new identities. By all means they made their own efforts to

overcome this, but it took longer and they had to endure more to achieve that. This also had a further effect on the university's retention of their husbands, the international students. With the exception of Celia, the others were either not sure or willing to leave, while Maggie was very determined that they should not want to stay after all that she experienced. It was very clear that these women were in need of help from outside with their English learning.

Research question B: How would the wives of international students evaluate MUN's current ESL service and support to them?

Five of the wives were active in participating in some of the services from the ESL Center and their comments on their experience were generally positive. However, the weakness of this service they pointed out was significant. Reasons for their non-participation either in part of the service or the whole of it included: not being informed, inaccurate word of mouth information, bad timing, and particular services not being available. Not being involved with any University activities, they did not have any sense of belonging to this community. They felt disappointed and not cared for by the others. Moreover, the current four kinds of service, academic writing, academic reading, conversation partner and conversation group, were not sufficient to meet their individual needs. A service containing diverse programs with consideration of the spouses' various learning needs was what they longed for.

Research question C: Concerning their own needs in developing English skills, what do they think the university can do to help them?

Speaking and listening were the needs in English the wives had in common. As well, the reading and test taking skills of some of them could be further developed with some help. All the women had made their own endeavors to enhance their language ability, and the case of each individual was presented in detail. In spite of this, most of them had discomfort in seeking others' help, and their own learning strategies such as following some ESL curriculum and practising sample TOEFL tests did not work as expected. Moreover, they thought that trying by themselves was not a best way for them to learn. Instead, they would like to have support from the University such as providing speaking practice opportunity, language training courses or programs with the consideration of individual needs such as a children's program.

Research question D: How would an ESL learning community help them? What are their expectations?

For the wives, the ESLLC would serve as a connection with other people, as an approach to group learning, and as a way to gain knowledge about people from different countries. It would be more than a site of language learning, and they would be able to find support, to make communications, and to make friends with people from other countries while learning more about other cultures. There were a lot of things the wives would like to do in the community, such as learning the language through getting to know about the culture and history of Canada and Newfoundland, and sharing knowledge with each other. What was most important for them was that they would like to learn together with others. Moreover, some of them suggested that an informal style of teaching should

be applied to the community and some expected formal and informal teaching should be combined according to what achievements they wanted to have.

In the next section, I shall present a model of the ESLLC based on the needs, expectations and suggestions of the international women interviewed.



## **Chapter Five: A Program Model of the ESLLC**

### **Introduction**

An English As a Second Language Learning Community is recommended as a solution to the language learning needs and problems of spouses of international students of Memorial University of Newfoundland. The mission and the goals of the ESLLC will be first established. Then in the following section, I will introduce a program model with its four stages: planning, development, implementation, and evaluation (Appendix F).

### Mission Statement

The ESL Language Community is focused on guiding and assisting spouses of International students of MUN who encounter difficulties with their English language learning and who desire to improve their language capability. It aims to meet the learning needs of those learners and promote life-long learning in their language study. Besides providing sources of knowledge, the ESLLC serves as the site for them to explore and share knowledge with each other. The services are composed of the English Zones, workshops, city tours, children's program, movie night, the language clinic, and the ESLLC website. Participants will be supported by the Children's program to make themselves available for their language learning. They will develop their basic language skills in the English Zones, share their knowledge and experience with each other in workshops, and gain knowledge of St. John's and Newfoundland from city tours. They will also explore cultural issues at movie night, address their concerns and difficulties in learning at the language clinic, and keep themselves informed by the ESLLC website.

Various language activities will be organized and the spouses are encouraged to work collaboratively in groups.

### Goals

- To build language skills of the spouses of International students;
- To increase English fluency levels of the spouses;
- To make their life easier by providing solutions to problems, such as adjustment to new life in Newfoundland, loneliness, lack of cultural resources, etc.;
- To create a comfortable, encouraging, and supportive learning environment for these learners.

## **Program Model**

### **Phase I: Program Planning**

Program planning is a blueprint for future phases. At this stage, target population should be defined; stakeholders should be informed in order to establish funding; and, a needs assessment should be conducted to identify what the problem is and what the program aims to achieve.

#### Target Population

As stated in the mission of the ESLLC, the learners of this program are spouses of international students of MUN who are in need of assistance in developing their English language skills. All spouses whose first language is not English can be invited to this program. Even those who are from countries where English is one of the official

languages may have similar needs to the others. As well it makes no difference whether they have had English instructions at school in their home countries or not. As long as they feel a need for a higher degree of English language proficiency, they would be able to take part in the program.

#### Stakeholders/Decision Makers

The stakeholders of this program are MUN's administrators and program managers as well as the ESL Center, the International Student Office, Student Services, and so on. Possible support from outside of the University can be found from government organizations such as the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Associations for New Canadians which provides, at a fee, language instruction services to non-immigrants. Nonprofit organizations such as local churches and the Refugee Immigrant Advising Council could also be sponsors of this program

#### Needs Assessment

Needs of English language development identified from cases in this study include: listening, speaking, reading, writing, testing skills (so as to pass TOEFL and be eligible to enter a university program here), communication with native-speakers of English as well as others, knowledge of the culture and history of Canada and Newfoundland, knowledge of other countries and cultures. As well, the decision makers should draw attention to the fact that needs assessment is an ongoing process (Shambaugh & Magliaro, 1997). With new information arising from the context and feedback collected from the other phases of this program model, the needs should be modified accordingly. For example, new data should be collected from new comers and

when new problems are put forward, new components should be added to the needs list. The opportunity to better serve the learners lies in those problems and what will make a difference is the decision makers' response to them.

With the completion of the planning, the content of the program can then be established. This leads to the developing stage.

## **Phase II. Program Development**

At the development stage, the goals of the ESLLC will first be analyzed to set the Intended Learning Objectives and time line. Then, the criteria for evaluation will be established, the spouses' characteristics and their learning settings will be analyzed, instructional strategies and content will be specified, and resources will be assessed.

### **Intended Learning Objectives**

Goals are the general description of what a program aims to achieve, but objectives specify what learners should be doing after the instruction (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). The goals of the ESLLC, as laid out in the introduction section of this chapter, are set based on the results of the needs assessment. The objectives are listed below: ESLLC participants will be able to:

- investigate chances to make interpersonal communications with native-speakers of English and with each other;
- communicate successfully by comprehending normal conversation and producing comprehensible language;
- negotiate to solve or avoid problems in daily life;

- use resources to get information and discuss the meaning;
- reduce their language anxiety and enhance their self-confidence;
- increase their learning motivation;
- develop cross-cultural understanding and friendship.

### Timeline

It is necessary to anticipate what to achieve by when in order to ensure the rapid and quality delivery of a successful program. It should be understood that language learning itself is a slow process and the starting points for individual learners are different. However, it is reasonable to expect that after one semester of active participation in all the components of the program, the spouses will go beyond their entrance levels of English and some of them will improve quite significantly. For example, spouses at an inter-mediate level may be able to join those of advanced level after one or two semester of participation.

### Criteria for Evaluation

Three aspects of the program should be evaluated: the content of instruction, the instruction strategies, and the achievements of learners. It is from the result of the content evaluation that the decision makers would identify what content is responding to the needs of the spouses. The evaluation of instruction strategies provides information on what teaching styles and teaching methods are effective. Finally the evaluation of the participants' achievement indicates whether learning occurs or not and, if it does, how well they have learned. With the consideration of time and funds, first of all, questionnaires can be used for the participants to do a self-evaluation (Appendix G).

Moreover, other evaluation methods can be applied to various learning activities. For example, all the participants can be asked to give a presentation on what they have learned about culture from all the services, and they could also holistic evaluations of each other. In addition, formal assessment instruments for learners of all three levels can be developed and administered.

#### Learners' characteristics

An assessment of relevant characteristics of the learners is essential for preparing for instruction. It is necessary to take into consideration the participants' demographic characteristics, geographical location, aptitude, experience, knowledge, learning style, attitudinal characteristics, previously learned skills, and attitudes, etc (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). As it was discussed earlier in this study, the spouses come from diverse backgrounds, with different beliefs, experience, knowledge, and learning styles in language learning. Special needs and those learners' prior knowledge have to be considered in order to have effective teaching. For example, An Arabic woman may feel more comfortable to have a female partner in one-on-one interaction and some participants may be reluctant to respond orally in large groups. Thus, a learner profile should be created to document their characteristics and the process and the achievement of their learning. Information about participants should be collected when they sign up to join the ESLLC, and their participation as well as every step of their success in learning should be recorded in their files.

### Learning environment

The main site of the ESLLC is where teaching and learning happen. Thus a comfortable and supportive delivery environment should be provided for the participants. A learning environment should be examined for how instruction is delivered (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). As it was pointed out by the participants of this case study, both informal and formal teaching are desirable and, thus, both an informal meeting place and a classroom setting are needed. The elements to be examined for the ESLLC include: the participants' involvement, their affiliation, instructor support, task orientation, and the site or the classroom as the learning setting. For all activities from the English Zone to the Website service, an analysis should be conducted on the participants' interests and willingness to participate as well as their levels of participation. It is also of importance to find out how well they can get along with or give support to each other, and to what extent they enjoy learning in the community. On the other hand, it is worth considering how much help they get from the instructor. The Language Clinic would require the highest concern of the instructor showing to the difficult situations the spouses have. Another thing to be considered is how important it is to complete planned teaching activities. Cooking Workshops are more task-orientated than the English Zone. It is essential for the spouses to go through each step of cooking a dish to ensure learning. However, in the English Zone, even if a presentation of Newfoundland fishermen's conversation is not finished, features of Newfoundland English can still be highlighted by the instructor. Finally, it is important to consider the conditions of the site of the ESLLC and the classroom, such as availability of instruction materials equipment. For instance,

kitchenware is needed for the Cooking Workshops. Thus it would be better to establish a temporary site of a kitchen setting; an Internet Surfing Workshop requires an appropriate number of computers, computer projector and access to the Internet. Resources are essential to a supportive community-learning environment where the overall goal is to maximize the occurrence of learning.

### Instructional strategies

Instructional strategies should be selected according to the Intended Learning Objectives and the characteristics of the spouses. The instructional approach is a blueprint of what will be taught and how it will be taught (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). It has an impact on the choice of instructional materials, delivery mode and media. In reality, the choice of an appropriate instructional strategy depends on analysis of the learning environment, the learners, the Intended Learning Objectives and constraints on the program design process (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). To teach the spouses basic web searching skills, an exposition strategy is most efficient with individualized instruction. However, a discovery strategy may be more appropriate for them to find out the similarities and the differences between Canadian culture and that of their own. The choice of language teaching strategies depends on each unique teaching event. For example, thematic teaching can be applied in the English Zones and incorporate English language concepts into a variety of topics in which participants are interested in; and communicative language teaching can make the workshops successful by providing comprehensible input in English and engaging participants in negotiating meaning in communication with others.



Moreover, as it is stated in the mission, the ESLLC serves as a site for the spouses of international students to gather together to share experiences and to enjoy learning. With this feature of the ESLLC, instructors should keep the following three instructional strategies in mind: to establish a positive environment, to personalize curriculum with students' experiences, and to utilize cooperative language learning. First, instructors should help the spouses to overcome their feeling of isolation or loneliness by nurturing a sense of safety and trust in the community. This can be achieved by activities that bring them closer, such as assigning a learning partner to everyone. Second, connections should be established between the curriculum and experience of these adult learners. Instructors can incorporate into lessons their diverse experiences and the richness of the participants' knowledge. For instance, a participant with a biology background can be invited to co-teach a session on Aging. Third, cooperative learning which allows participants to work together in pairs or in groups can involve them fully in their learning, reduce their anxiety, and strengthen their motivation. To accomplish a cooperative task, the spouses have to be active in negotiating and contribution with the others. Well-structured cooperative learning activities encouragement, support and help the spouses to learn more actively and effectively.

#### Program content

Traditionally, teachers identify what is to be covered in a course or program and instruction is a process of information transmitting from teachers to students. This is at odds with the community-based learning theory concept of this project which promotes learners' involvement in their own learning. Thus, based on the spouses' needs identified

in this study, seven elements of the program would be the focus of the service: the English Zones, workshops, city tours, children's program, movie night, the language clinic, and the ESLLC website.

- The English Zones

This would be the main site to develop the basic language skills of the spouses. As they enter the ESLLC, they will be grouped into Zone A, Zone B, Zone C according to their attended levels of English proficiency which would be assessed. They can meet two mornings for 3 hours in the Zones. Then, instructional materials for each level can be decided via dialogue between instructors and the spouses. Either currently available curriculum or a curricula developed by themselves is acceptable so long as it fulfils the spouses' concerns. Various teaching activities can be applied with the consideration of those adult learners' characteristics. It is the instructors' responsibility to make certain that implementation of the chosen curricula would develop all the basic language skills simultaneously.

- Workshops

Thematic workshops should take place bi-weekly. These workshops would be contexts for all the participants to get together to explore topics they are interested in and to share their own knowledge with each other. Suggested topics are: chat on the Internet, web resources for ESL, dealing with emergencies such as fire, cooking skills such as cake decorating, games which develops language skills, and cultures of the spouses' home countries. Instructors and the participants of the ESLLC can facilitate workshops together, which intend to connect English with the spouses'

prior knowledge as well as to give them a chance to utilize their expertise.

However, participants should be prepared by basic presentation skills which would need the instructors and participants to develop together beforehand plans for workshops.

- City Tours

Tours in the city guided by instructors can be arranged once a month. This would enable participants of the ESLLC to gain knowledge of this new place, to become familiar with Newfoundland culture, and to accustom to their new life here.

Various teaching activities can be incorporated with tours. For example, to prepare a visit to Signal Hill, historical notes as well as folklore can be introduced.

Afterwards those whose English is above intermediate level can have a session of discussion on what impressed them most, while beginners can have a vocabulary brainstorming of things they saw during their trip.

- Children's program

Two basic kinds of children's program may be provided simultaneously with teaching or activity sessions of the participants. Childcare for children between 1 and 6 and a program for those of 7 and above should be offered if needed.

Experienced childcare givers should keep children fully occupied with their own activities and make sure no interruption would be made to the spouses' program.

Hired students or volunteers can be in charge of looking after older kids. Reading, painting, gaming, and other playing activities can be facilitated.

- Movie night

Movie night can be organized every two weeks. Film is also an exposure to the other cultures for participants of the ESLLC, which can also engage their interest and discussion on cultural issues. Instructors, together with the spouses, can select international movies in English, classic or modern, or both. Instructors should facilitate shows of those movies in a way to maximize chance of learning for participants. Information about a movie, brief or detailed, can be distributed ahead of time. A movie night should be followed by a debriefing session with topics chosen from the movie raised by participants. Such activities would be planned depending on participants' English levels. In addition, movies should be played according to the level of English language used, from low to high.

- The Language Clinic

Opening one afternoon for two hours every week, the Language Clinic would provide individual help to participants with their concerns or problems relating to the English language. Counselors at the Clinic can be both instructors and trained students. Each "case" should be diagnosed and treated on a one-on-one basis. Counselors would be able to assist participants with various aspects of language learning. For instance, they can identify participants' particular pronunciation problems and correct them; they can make suggestions on participants' choice of words and expressions in writing; and they can even give personal advice or work together with participants on career planning. Extra appointments for "emergencies" can be arranged between counselors and participants, if needed, and participants would be instructed on how to handle emergencies. For example, if a

child of a participant got sick, she or he would not panic without knowing what to do because they would know counselors at the Language Clinic are willing to instruct them on where to go and how to get help.

- The ESLLC Website

A website for ESLLC should be created. It can be used to provide information about the program, to promote the program, and to offer learning resources for ESL learners. Information on the design, the rationale, and the content of ESLLC, as well as activities and workshop schedules would invite the target audience to come into the site to learn more about the program. Typical achievements of the program, such as pieces of participants' writing, solutions to problems in their learning, and reports on their progress, would be used to advertise the program. Moreover, useful learning resources can be collected by participants, to share between among themselves, and with the vast population of ESL learners. If there are participants who are knowledgeable in website construction, their expertise can be utilized in maintaining this site. A sample interface of the website is enclosed in Appendix H.

Generally, these services require that participants spend at least 11 hours every week in the ESLLC (Appendix I). However, to better serve them, their needs and concerns should be discovered promptly. Thus, there should be constant dialogue on the program content between the decision makers and the spouses and relevant changes should be made accordingly.

### Assessment of resources

This includes sufficient funding, the availability of teaching materials, reference resources, teaching places, relevant equipments, instructors, and a program coordinator. A detailed budget plan should be prepared for the ESLLC at this stage for the seven components of the program service. For example, for the English Zone, how much it will cost to hire instructors, to provide teaching materials and equipments and to prepare for teaching activities. For the Childcare Program, the cost to hire childcare givers, to prepare toys and books, and to establish the children's program center; and to build up the ESLLC website, the cost of one desktop computer and access to the Internet. Moreover, teaching materials, reference resources, teaching places, equipments, instructors, and other relevant variables in the learning settings are all of great importance. Out-of-date textbooks with old-fashioned language, lack of reference and materials, a classroom with bad physical conditions, poor teaching equipment, instructors' unavailability, any single factor of these would have a negative effect on the participants' learning outcomes. Furthermore, the program coordinator is responsible for coordinating the implementation of all the components of the program, as well as documentation of program work. This includes:

- Administering the instructional components;
- Recruiting childcare givers, children's program instructors;
- Recruiting and training instructors;
- Recruiting participants;
- Facilitating all teaching activities as well as workshops;

- Facilitating evaluations, surveys and documentations;
- Preparing reports for the funders;
- Helping with fund-raising.

These are the basic components of the development of the ESLLC program.

Furthermore, according to the result of the resources assessment, modifications may be applied to instructional strategies and content.

### **Phase III Program Implementation**

Implementation of the ESLLC program includes two steps, a pilot study and formal implementation. A pilot study is necessary to ensure successful implementation and the results from the pilot would have a direct impact on the implementation.

#### **A Pilot Study**

The first step of implementation of the ESLLC should be a pilot study which is a trial of all the ideas of the program plan. It provides feedback about how to improve those ideas. As an approach to formative evaluation, it is conducted during the formative stages of program developments which should be before instruction delivery to the majority of the target audience (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). It is believed that instruction materials and methods can be improved from piloting them. A pilot study team should be first established through promotion to focus on the stakeholders. This will be followed by staff training on all the elements of the ESLLC, the goals, the Intended Learning Outcomes, the learners, evaluation criteria, instructional strategies and content, and especially the aim of the pilot study. Next, with a small group of participants, the ESLLC will be

organized and put into a trial of service. Survey as well as focus group interview with the participants, the instructors, and the stakeholders, can be conducted after. During this stage, feedback and evaluation of every program component will be collected and documented. In the end, analysis of the results will be conducted, and both the strength and weaknesses of the ESLLC will be identified. Decisions will be then made on the revision of relevant parts of the program. For example, it might be found that participation on the movie nights is extremely low. Some spouses may report they are not comfortable to come together and watch movies in the evenings. An alternative approach may be suggested that a certain movie would be made available at a certain period of time to let the spouses sign out to watch at home with an informal discussion session to follow later to give them chance to share their feelings about the movie. In all, all revisions will be based upon the feedback from the pilot study and the results of this evaluation should be reported to the stakeholders.

### Implementation

The ESLLC can finally be implemented after the pilot study and relevant revisions are completed. Its success depends on promotion through public relations and formal training of instructors and program administration. A wide range of promotion of the ESLLC should be conducted from the decision makers to all the possible stakeholders, such as instructors, program managers, the ESL Center, the International Student Office, Student Services, the New Canadians Association and local churches. A variety of promotion methods may be applicable, such as mailings, flyers, local and University newspapers, (department) newsletters, website and phone promotion. It is



vital to make sure international students are informed about the ESLLC and relevant information should reach them before they come, upon their arrival, and after they settle in.

Informal training program as the ESLLC is, it involves different philosophical assumptions, as well as different language instruction approaches and materials. The instructors' competence and confidence in successfully implementing their instruction are of great importance. Thus, formal training sessions should be provided to prepare them for instruction. How to meet the spouses' individual needs during a teaching session? How to deal with information conflicts concerning cultural issues? What about other unexpected events during teaching? Discussion of issues as such would prepare them for the implementation.

A key factor of the success of implementation is its reinforcement by a management system (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). The key elements of the management of the ESLLC include the spouses' entrance to the program, its time frame, the availability of resources, and its record keeping. First, the program coordinator should ensure the possibility for the target learners, spouses of international students, to participate in the series of services. An ESLLC Center can be set up as the site to implement instruction, organize activities, and provide other services to the spouses. A certificate of participation can be an additional attraction to the participants as the product of this program. For those whose English proficiency is assessed to have met the University requirements, consideration should be given for them to be exempted from the English tests such as TOEFL if they apply to study at MUN. At the same time, the

stakeholders may consider offering this program free as one of the major attractions of MUN to international students. Second, to successfully track accomplishments of the program, a time line should be prepared to specify “who does what by when” (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1998). This serves as a clear picture of the sequences and the timeliness of the services and instruction activities. Third, the management of resources will monitor the allocation of funds. Checklists can be used to keep track of the available and needed equipments, materials, and personnel. Fourth, record keeping or documentation helps monitor the process of the implementation. A learner profile should be established for all spouses and their achievements should be documented periodically. As well, a personnel profile and training record may not only provide positive feedback to decision makers about what has been achieved in what ways, but also help them reflect on existing problems and obstacles to program success.

The success of implementing the ESLLC depends on the control of its process. It requires not only the monitoring of its variables but also the anticipation of them. As well, it demands rapid reaction to the fluctuations of factors over which decision makers have no control.

#### **Phase IV: Program Evaluation**

As the final stage of program development, evaluation is the act of rendering judgments and determining value, worth, and merit without questioning or diminishing the important roles evaluation plays in decision-making and political actions (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). The CIPP model (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 1985) can assist decision

makers in judging and improving the ESLLC. The main components of this evaluation model are context, input, process and product. In the initial planning stage, the needs of this program should be analyzed and evaluated to help set its objectives. Research should be conducted about the external environment or the context to ensure the feasibility of the program. The needs of the spouses of international students should be examined. The input evaluation contains the assessment of resources and decisions about alternative strategies focusing on the development of program planning. The evaluation of the process can be achieved by the pilot study, which has been discussed in the previous phase. After piloting, relevant revisions should be made to facilitate the implementation. In the end, the final product of the program will be evaluated to determine if the goals have been achieved. This model should be modified depending on participants and stakeholder feedback. Components of the ESLLC can be eliminated and/or added on.

## **Conclusion**

As an open system, the survival of the model for ESLLC depends on its transactions with its environment. The fluctuation of any single variable in the environment could cause a chain effect to all the other components of the program. For example, it may be found that some needs of male participants differ from those of women. Service for them should be added to the program, and all the relevant factors may be modified, such as the Intended Learning Outcomes, the performance evaluation, the instructional strategies, and so on. In all, program design is an ongoing process and

the success of the ESLLC relies not only on the achievement of its goals but also on the management of its process and constant modification to this model.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

### Part 1: General information:

1. What is your status now? working ; staying at home; with kids; others  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What country are you from?
3. What is your mother tongue<sup>1</sup>?
4. How long have you been in St. John's?
5. You came here as a visitor; a landed immigrant; others
6. Is it your first time abroad?

### Part 2: Education and language skills:

1. What is your highest degree or diploma?
2. Do you have plan for more schooling?  
Yes; No  
Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
3. How would you grade your English level (listen, speak, read or write)?  
Beginner; intermediate; advanced; other  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Have you done test such as TOEFL?  
If yes, score:  
If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>1</sup> This information will only be used for sampling purpose and will not be published or included in the project report.

5. When did you start to learn English?

6. How did you learn English?

At school; with tutor; by myself;

other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you making efforts to improve your English?

Yes; No;

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 3: Entering MUN and ESL service

1. Have you tried to study at MUN?

Yes; No;

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If your English is improved enough, will that make it easier for you to go back to school?

Yes; No;

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

3. If your English is improved enough, would you attend MUN?

Yes; No;

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you know any ESL service or support the university provides for you?

5. Have your ever tried any ESL service or support the university provides for you?

6. In what other ways can the university help you with this?

7. A study about improving MUN's ESL service to you is going on. Would you like to be involved?

If yes, please leave your name and contact information here:

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If no, please explain:

---

**Appendix B: Sample letter to the participants**  
**Letter of consent<sup>1</sup>**

Kong, Xiaoqian  
 Box 35,  
 Faculty of Education, MUN,  
 St. John's, NF, A1B, 3X8

Dear Ms./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am researching the university's ESL (English as a second language) service for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education. Your contribution to the data would be highly appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to investigate to what degree our ESL service has satisfied spouses of international students and to attempt to meet their actual needs by building up a language learning community for them.

Please be assured that:

- 1) Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question or discuss or write about any topic if you do not wish to. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any prejudice.
- 2) All information gathered during this study is strictly confidential. You will not be identified at any time and your real name will not be used in the study.
- 3) There will be four areas of the study in which your input will be valued. The first is the enclosed questionnaire and it may also help you to see if you are interested in this research. It may take you about half an hour to complete it. The second area is an interview between you and me; it will be approximately one hour. The third area will be some reflective journals from you during my two months of data collection. No time requirements will be specified for this and a note about the journals is enclosed. Finally, a focus group interview will be conducted close to the end of the data collection. This will be about one to two hours.
- 4) The questionnaires will be destroyed upon the completion of this study.
- 5) The interviews will be recorded by a tape recorder, and transcribed. Besides, during the process of interviewing, I will keep field notes. The tapes, transcripts, notes and your journals will be kept in a safe place and no one else will have access to them

---

<sup>1</sup> Translations of consent letter to participants' mother tongue will be offered when needed.

except my supervisor, Dr. Yeoman and me. The transcripts and notes will be destroyed and your journals will be returned to you upon the completion of the study.

- 6) A copy of the research result will be available to you upon the completion of the study.
- 7) Upon your request, any resulting publication(s) will be made available to you.

Having a family to support here myself, I am very aware of your busy schedule. I will greatly appreciate that if you would return this consent form to me by Sept. 30. 2001.

This study has been approved by my supervisor, Dr. E. Yeoman, and the Ethic Review of Committee of MUN.

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign below and return one copy with the questionnaire to me using the inter-mail envelop provided. The other copy is for you. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research in general, please do not hesitate to contact me at 754-5210 (home) or [x95xk@mun.ca](mailto:x95xk@mun.ca), or my supervisor, Dr. E. Yeoman, at 737-3411. In addition, Dr. R. Hammett, Associate Dean of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, is available to you as a resource person, unrelated to this project.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and participation. I look forward to your input.

Warmest regards,

Xiaoqian Kong

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name here please) is willing to participate in the study conducted by Kong, Xiaoqian inquiring into ESL service to wives of international students. As a participant of this investigation, I understand that all information collected will be strictly confidential with regard to my identity. My participation is entirely voluntary and I do not have to answer any question or discuss or write about any topic if I prefer not to. The interview will be tape-recorded and will be transcribed. The questionnaires, the tapes, the transcripts and field notes will be destroyed and my journals will be returned to me upon the completion of this inquiry. Any resulting publications will be made available to me upon my request. I also understand that I may contact Dr. R. Hammett, Associate Dean of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, a person not directly related to the research project, if I have concerns or questions not answerable by the researcher.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Appendix C: The list of questions to be used in individual interviews**

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question A:

In what ways has English fluency been influencing the life of those wives?

- 1) Do you use English everyday? In what ways (listen, speak, read or write, etc.)?
- 2) Can you express yourself very well in English? In what ways (listen, speak, read or write, etc.)?
- 3) What language do you use to communicate in your family?
- 4) Do you have family back at your home country? What language do you use when you contact them<sup>1</sup>?
- 5) In what situation do you feel comfortable/uncomfortable to make contact in English with the local people/outside world?
- 6) If you apply for a job, would English be a problem (i. e. communication with others)?
- 7) If you applied/did not apply to study at MUN, was English a problem?
- 8) If you apply to study at MUN, would English be a problem (i. e. attending a lecture?)
- 9) Would your spouse stay here for further study? Why or why not?

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question B: How would the wives of international students evaluate MUN's current ESL service and support to them?

- 1) What ESL service is available for you at MUN? How did you get this information?

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<sup>1</sup> This question provides information about how often they have to use English (i. e. email) or how comfortable they feel to it with their family. Their specific mother tongue will not be mentioned in the project report.



- 2) Have you experienced any of this service?
- 3) Were you active in getting the service? Why or why not?
- 4) Were you pleased with the service? Why or why not?
- 5) When you are in need of improving your English, would you go to the university for help? Why or why not?
- 6) Do you plan to apply for another university later? Why or why not?

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question C:

Concerning your own needs in developing your English skills, what do you think the university can do to help you?

- 1) What do you think you would need to improve your English language skills? Why?
- 2) In what ways have you tried to improve your English? Did they work? Why or why not?
- 3) Can the university help you? Why or why not?
- 4) What help would you like the university to provide for you?
- 5) If you can meet the language requirements to study with some help, would you stay with MUN?

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question D: How would an ESL learning community help them? What are their expectations?

- 1) What do you think of the idea of getting together with other international women?
- 2) What do you think of the idea of learning English in an informal way?
- 3) What support will you need from the university?
- 4) What do you think you can get from a community like this?

5) What suggestions do you have for building up such a community?

### **Appendix D: The list of questions to be used in focus group interview**

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question A: In what ways has English fluency been influencing the lives of those wives?

- 1) Is English very important in your life? Why or why not?
- 2) Is it necessary for you to improve your English? Why or why not?

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question B: How would the wives of international students evaluate MUN's current ESL service and support to them?

- 1) Is the existing ESL service at MUN sufficient to you? Why or why not?
- 2) Would you need help with your English from the university? Why or why not?

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question C: Concerning their own needs in developing their English skills, what do they think the university can do to help them?

- 1) Do you think the university should have some special program for international spouses? Why or why not?
- 2) What kind of programs would you like to have?

Questions to be used in interview to draw answers relevant to Research Question D: How would an ESL learning community help them? What are their expectations?

- 1) Would you like the idea of getting together with women in similar situations, learning English together and supporting each other? Why or why not?
- 2) Would both formal and informal study help you with your English? How?

### **Appendix E: Reflective Journal**

Participants will be asked to reflect on their experience, their perceptions of needs for learning English. They can give response to the following questions or write anything relating to the research questions.

1. How eagerly do you want to improve your English and why?
2. What was your first impression of the university's ESL service?
3. Why you are active/inactive in using the service?
4. What are the important things that would help you improve your English?
5. What would be the ideal service you would like to get from the university?
6. Do you have any chance to meet other international women? When? Where? How?
7. Are you willing to share your experience and knowledge with them?
8. What is your ideal learning community like?
9. What support would you like to give others or get from the learning community?
10. Would you have any difficulty joining the community? Please explain.

### Appendix F: A Program Model for ESLLC

Designing Stages	Designing activities	Content
Program planning	Identify target population	Spouses of international students
	Inform stakeholders	University administrators, etc.
	Conduct needs assessment	This case study
Program developing	Intended Learning Objectives	Communication; Language comprehension and production; Problem-solving; To use resources; Confidence; Motivation; Cross-cultural awareness.
	Timeline	<p>Fall ↓ Winter ↓ Spring</p> <p>Beginning ↓ Above ↓ Intermediate</p> <p>Above ↓ Advanced</p>
	Criteria for evaluation	Instruction content; Instruction strategies; Learners' achievements.
	Learners' characteristics	<div> Background Beliefs Experience Knowledge Learning styles Special needs Etc. </div> <div> Learners' profiles </div>
	Learning environment	Participants' involvement; Participants' affiliation; Instructor support; Task orientation; Conditions of the site (classroom/meeting/temporary);
	Instructional strategies	Positive environment; Personalized curriculum; Cooperative language learning.

	Program content	The English Zones; Workshops; City tours; Children's program; Movie night; The language clinic; The ESLLC website.
	Assessment of resources	Funding; Teaching materials; Reference resources; Teaching places; Equipments; Instructors; A program coordinator Etc.
Program implementation	A pilot study	A pilot study team; Staff training; A small group of participants; Piloting; Feedback --- surveys/interviews
	Implementation	Promotion; Instructor training; Program management.
Program evaluation	Context	Environment at the planning stage
	Input	Development of the ESLLC
	Process	Piloting
	Product	If the goals are achieved

### **Appendix G: Sample Self-Evaluation Questionnaire for the ESLLC**

I. Write two or three sentences about what benefits you get from the following service and any suggestions you may have for improvement.

- The English Zones;
- Workshops;
- City tours;
- Movie night;
- The language clinic;
- The ESLLC website

II. What about your own language skills has improved?

III. If you could join the ESLLC again next semester, what would be your focus of study?

## Appendix H: Sample website interface

the ESL Center  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

# Home for the ESLLC: the ESL Learning Community

*Welcome to the ESLLC! This is where you can meet international students spouses like you who are in need of improving English and practicing their language here as well as make friends.*

- Who are invited?
- Where are we?
- the English Zones
- Workshops
- Movie night
- Tearoom
- the Language clinic
- ESLLC cafe
- Children's program
- Contact the ESLLC



Created on Nov. 6, 2002

Modified on Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2002



### Appendix I: Sample schedule

<i><b>Monday</b></i>	<i><b>Tuesday</b></i>	<i><b>Wednesday</b></i>	<i><b>Thursday</b></i>	<i><b>Friday</b></i>
9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare		9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare	2pm-4pm  Language Clinic/ Children's program	7pm-9pm  Movie night/ Children's program
<i><b>Monday</b></i>	<i><b>Tuesday</b></i>	<i><b>Wednesday</b></i>	<i><b>Thursday</b></i>	<i><b>Friday</b></i>
9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare	9:30am-12:30pm  Workshop/childcare	9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare	2pm-4pm  Language Clinic/ Children's program	
<i><b>Monday</b></i>	<i><b>Tuesday</b></i>	<i><b>Wednesday</b></i>	<i><b>Thursday</b></i>	<i><b>Friday</b></i>
9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare		9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare	2pm-4pm  Language Clinic/ Children's program	7pm-9pm  Movie night/ Children's program
<i><b>Monday</b></i>	<i><b>Tuesday</b></i>	<i><b>Wednesday</b></i>	<i><b>Thursday</b></i>	<i><b>Friday</b></i>
9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare	9:30am-12:30pm  Workshop/childcare	9:30am-12:30pm  The English Zones/childcare	2pm-4pm  Language Clinic/ Children's program	9:30am-12:30pm  City tours







