



# **Manchester, New Hampshire, ESOL Needs Analysis: Thematic Synthesis**

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## Organizational Partners



The [SNHU Center for New Americans](#), led in partnership with YWCA NH, opened in 2017 to serve the educational needs of New American families in Manchester, NH. The program's foundation is a safe space that welcomes anyone who enters, no matter their path to get there.



The [NH Equity Collective](#) is a center of learning and exploration and a community of practice, where people of color and white people in allyship model and practice equity together by: centering, lifting up, nurturing and honoring the wisdom and knowledge that comes from the lived experience of people of color and other historically excluded persons; working together to establish relationships built on trust; and seeking to model and embody the practice of equity in all that we do.



The [Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research](#) is a research center at the Institute for Community Health (ICH). We are a team of interdisciplinary social science researchers with expertise at the intersection of immigrant, economic, and health justice. We partner with immigrant communities, advocates, policymakers, and social and health systems on actionable research to improve immigrant health and well-being.

## Summary

From March–December 2023, the Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research (LZC) at the Institute for Community Health partnered with Southern New Hampshire University’s Center for New Americans (SNHU) and the New Hampshire Equity Collective (EqColl) on a robust **needs analysis regarding the English language instruction strengths and needs for immigrants and refugees in Manchester, New Hampshire.**

The primary goal of this project was to contribute qualitative findings to a larger SNHU-led community needs analysis exploring how and to what extent the resources available in Manchester meet the needs of English language learners. LZC and EqColl collected data from a total of **109 participants through key informant interviews (n=11), storytelling (n=15), and focus groups (n=83).** LZC’s final deliverable to SNHU is the thematic analysis below, which provides an overview of findings via key themes and sub-themes, a description of each sub-theme, and illustrative quotes from the data that substantiate the description.

SNHU will incorporate these findings into a report that draws on additional data (literature, survey data, etc.) and may develop recommendations for SNHU’s Center for New Americans and/or community partners to **leverage new and existing resources in the future to improve the adult ESOL landscape in Manchester and beyond.** The three organizational partners agreed to share these thematic findings publicly in the meantime for maximum impact.

## Thematic Research Questions

### ***Theme 1: Community and English learner perspectives***

The overarching question for this theme was **“What motivates adult learners to learn English?”** The ESOL learner focus groups and storytelling workshops gathered data on the differences in English learners’ pathways/journeys; the needs, assets, and aspirations of adult English learners in Manchester; the types of resources that were most supportive on ESOL learners’ journeys; the people and/or institutions that were most or least helpful in their language learning; the platforms, pedagogies, and environments that most or least facilitated their English language learning; the barriers and challenges that English learners encounter in their learning pathways; their ideal setting and program for an English class; and the degree of welcoming or sense of belonging that adult English learners experience in Manchester.

### ***Theme 2: Institutional landscape***

The overarching question of this theme was “**What are the strengths and challenges in the current ESOL landscape in Manchester?**” The key informant interviews and ESOL learner focus groups and storytelling workshops provided data on the language learning resources that exist in Manchester for English learners; the programs and settings that work well for ESOL learners; the key players and roles in the Manchester ESOL landscape; their vision for ESOL programs; missing resources or services; the differences between ESOL providers’ and adult English learners’ goals, outcomes, and perceptions of the ESOL journey; resources needed in order to be able to pursue English classes; standard success measures for adult learners; and the potential roles of SNHU and the Center for New Americans in this institutional landscape.

## **Thematic Analysis**

The thematic analysis grid below was constructed through analysis of the qualitative data gathered throughout this study, namely, key informant interviews, stories, and interviews and focus groups with ESOL learners (see **Appendix A: Study Methods**). LZC, SNHU, and EqColl co-developed the thematic areas and questions that informed the interview and focus group guides. Resultant data informed the development of a codebook, with additional codes added during the coding process through inductive methods. The thematic analysis is a summary of findings by themes, with selected quotes or examples from the qualitative data that illustrate that theme. The analysis incorporates commonly shared themes and experiences as well as different perspectives where applicable to provide a nuanced understanding of the theme. It is important to note that the data coalesced into very consistent patterns and we did not identify any vital comparisons or conflicts in the aggregate, so differences of opinion or perspective are noted but not weighted. Wherever appropriate, we note the ‘majority’ opinion or share what ‘most’ people said to indicate saturation. We also note areas where there is a range of opinions with no clear consensus.

# Thematic Analysis

## Thematic Analysis Key

K = Key Informant Interview

I = ESOL Learner Interview

FG = ESOL Learner Focus Group

S = ESOL Learner Story

Theme	Description	Quotes
<b>Demographics</b>		
Countries / regions of origin	<p>English language learners in Manchester are from a wide range of countries and regions of the world (see <b>Table 1</b> in Appendix A for sample characteristics). People are proud to share their stories of origin, although there are some aspects that people prefer not to share due to the trauma of forced migration. Importantly, we did not ask people to share their migration stories and stuck to their experiences related to English language learning, unless they chose to share more about their background. Many immigrants and refugees have lived in multiple countries for significant amounts of time before arriving in the United States and bring a variety of global perspectives. The traditional refugee resettlement program is</p>	<p>"Most participants are from Bhutan and occasionally Spanish speakers, others from Argentina." – K002</p> <p>"I'm from Congo, I was raised in Rwanda and I came here in 2012." – FG008</p> <p>"It was mostly Congolese [arriving as refugees] but there is so much else going on . . . 200 Afghans, and there are also 900 sponsored Ukrainians in New Hampshire." – K011</p>

	<p>relatively small in New Hampshire right now, but there are other immigrants and evacuees (such as Ukrainians and Central Americans) who need different types of services and who may not be sponsored by refugee resettlement agencies. Participants and key informants also pointed out that the large and diverse Latino community is underserved because there is no clear service pathway for them. The ESOL population is constantly changing, with patterns that can be tracked and even anticipated by being attuned to migration data and global trends. Although some key informants were well-informed about these trends, this was not always the case, and it may be beneficial to develop some inter-agency communication or data briefs that prepare providers to more fully understand the backgrounds of their students.</p>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Live in Manchester	<p>Most participants relocated to Manchester and have felt welcomed, and several noted that they feel safe in Manchester. At the same time, when pressed to share moments where English presented barriers to communication and overall integration into workplaces, schools, doctors' offices, or other everyday settings, they shared more examples of being treated differently because of having an accent, or not speaking fluently (see quotes under Discrimination and Wellness/health).</p>	<p>"I'm from Philippines, been living here for eight years now, and so far I like Manchester, NH." – S010</p>

Live outside Manchester	<p>A few participants live in the communities surrounding Manchester and drive in for classes. We also spoke to a few people who used to live in Manchester and took classes there but moved to another community. Although New Hampshire is small, participants did not necessarily know about programs and services available to them in different parts of the city or state. In this way, it felt that a neighborhood-based or ethnic community-based analysis of the ESOL landscape could be useful, as well as a resource that students could access to find out what their options are to match schedules, English levels, cost, location, and more.</p>	N/A
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
<b>Barriers</b>		
Cost of attendance	<p>Most ESOL classes in Manchester are free for lower levels, but when people get into a high-intermediate or advanced level, they face some cost barriers, because most classes offered at the community college or university charge fees. Most participants feel that it would be helpful if higher level ESOL classes were offered for free in Manchester. Participants noted that this would help them to advance in their careers more quickly. Several key informants noted that a lot of English language learners taper off after reaching a certain level of high intermediate fluency, which allows</p>	<p>“There is also a few [classes] in schools, but those do have a cost and they are in season so not quite ongoing. For most people, paying for those classes is hard, and paying to learn English is hard.” – FG002</p>

	them to navigate day to day life, but prevents them from accessing higher level professional jobs.	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Generic classes	The current landscape for ESOL is not adequately specific or specialized enough to meet the different needs of diverse learners. Key informants and participants noted this and felt it can impede learning for highly educated people as well as students who are pre-literate. The diversity of English language learners in Manchester NH ranges widely and includes people who have never had any formal education as well as university professors. ESOL classes conduct testing to place people into different levels, but there are not enough gradients in the classes for people to move up as fast as some would like.	“One thing that I think is missing—a place where people who have already had a fair amount of education . . . They are a different learner than a person that has had no schooling, doesn’t write in their own language, and maybe had 3 years of school, maybe 6. They have a different background than someone who has maybe graduated from high school, or college, and has already learned another language.” – K011
Childcare	Childcare is required for English learners' parents. Participants are unable to attend sessions due to a lack of childcare. Some focus group participants noted that they would be more likely to attend ESOL classes if there was childcare provided, and others noted that they have friends or family members who would benefit from that. At the same time, some respondents noted that people they know would not feel comfortable leaving their children with just anyone, but if they could leave them with a trusted friend or family member, that would be okay.	“The problem for childcare—we can request that every person can choose her own person who’s going to watch the kids, like if she has a friend she trusts or if she has a family. She’s the one who she can choose herself . . . If she sent that kid to the woman she trusts, the best friend, she’s going to feel okay to leave her kids with that person.” – FG012

		"Some people have to be at home to take care of their kids and can only take online classes." – K007
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Transportation	Transportation was one of the most cited barriers. Participants described the challenges they faced in getting to classes if they did not drive, did not have a car, or could not access reliable public transportation.	"People don't have the means and transportation to get to school." – FG008
Full classes	Overall, most participants noted that classes in Manchester are full, which is one of the reasons why people aren't signing up for English classes. At the same time, we also heard from key informants that participation ebbs and flows and that there are sometimes spots available in classes, indicating that there may be a mismatch in communication between providers and learners, especially across programs. It is also possible that the perception that everything is full is hindering people from signing up.	"There is not many ESL classes or the spaces are limited. People have to wait next year." – FG010
Choosing not to learn / ability to get by	Participants noted that some people choose not to enroll in English classes because they can get by with what little they know, and others rely on other people as translators. Most people felt that the reason there are community members who don't take classes, however, is not because they don't want to learn.	"When you have someone next to you who speaks English and your native language, you get comfortable and rely on them to help you because it is easier to do that than learn, which is intimidating." – FG002

	<p>Instead, it is because they are getting by, some people feel they will not be able to learn more as adults, and others just do not have the time or support they need to be able to structure formal classes into their everyday lives.</p>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Unaware of available classes	Participants are unaware of available classes because of a lack of information.	"Another barrier may be also just not know that is available. Maybe some people are not able to access the information that there are classes." – FG005
Work, schedules, and household expenses	Participants are unable to attend sessions because they must work to support their families, making it impossible to add classes on top to their schedule	"After the 3 years I quit attending classes as I needed to take an extra job to be able to support my family, I was working 10 to 12 hours a day. It was difficult to add the classes to my schedule." – S008
<b>Institutional landscape</b>		
Types of providers– in person settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English classes are available in a wide variety of settings across Manchester and the surrounding region, and participant had accessed classes at each of the following locations:</li> <li>• Churches (ENA, Holy Cross, and other church-based classes)</li> <li>• High school</li> </ul>	<p>"I moved here five years ago. My first year, I was learning English on YouTube, and after that I went to Manchester Community College. That's where I did one class." – FG008</p> <p>"The only place I could receive some type of help navigating the system was the now</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based organizations (MCRC, Latin American Center, BCNH)</li> <li>• Community college</li> <li>• Four-year institutions (UNH, St. Anselm College, SNHU)</li> <li>• Refugee resettlement agency (IINE)</li> <li>• Adult learning center in Nashua</li> <li>• A private company with its own pedagogy tailored to Brazilians</li> <li>• At work</li> </ul>	<p>disappeared Latin American Center. Luckily these places offered English as second Language classes. These classes were amazing. We had people from different parts of the world and got to learn from other cultures while learning English. I enrolled in classes two days a week. I attended as much as I could and continued attending for at least three years.” – S008</p> <p>“Courses at churches are really helpful and make it easier for you to familiarize yourself with the sounds in English.” – FG002</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Siloes / Need for coordination between and among classes	There was a range of opinions about whether an ESOL class list or database/resource would be a useful way to enhance coordination and communication among and between providers and for students. On one hand, everyone felt it was important for students to be able to choose the best fit for themselves, whenever possible. On the other hand, people noted how difficult it is to develop and maintain accurate resource guides and whether this type of resource would be worth the investment. If this type of thing were developed, having it easily accessible and easy to	<p>“From my perspective, it’s not that important to coordinate programming . . . I think it’s fine if there are lots of programs around everywhere that are kind of neighborhood-centric . . . I think students should have some kind of resource so they know where to go for different levels of training.” – K011</p> <p>One key informant suggested an online resource database for English language</p>

	update and with a single point of contact to maintain it was a recommended approach.	learners as a potentially helpful resource for people to understand the courses available to them and to be able to choose among several options, instead of just attending the course that they hear about first. – K006
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Success measures	Key informants describe how they assess progress in English classes. Every class has their own metrics to measure student-level progress, but for most programs, a learner’s survival and every day functioning are priority. One key informant was especially interested in learning how well the overall ESOL landscape was functioning in New Hampshire at a higher level, for example developing a dashboard or tracking coordinated metrics across ESOL programs to answer something at a population level, like “How well are ESOL learners integrating into NH along linguistic lines?”	<p>“Once a student takes a class for over 40 hours, we start to schedule a post test.” – K007</p> <p>“The community programs are very much survival oriented.” – K001</p> <p>“There isn’t enough time for immersion. The hours available to people and the philosophy around learning English and the balance between work and learning English isn’t right . . . People end up with English as a string of nouns . . . It doesn’t advance . . . They never have the opportunity.” – K011</p>
Classes at capacity / lack of	Existing classes are all full, and key informants expressed being stretched thin trying to meet the needs of so many different people. The largest needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy classes are all full</li> <li>• Advanced classes are also lacking.</li> </ul>

space or gaps in landscape	seem to be on the lowest and highest levels of proficiency. There is ample opportunity to expand resources in collaboration with apprenticeship programs, specific workforce training programs, industry-specific pre-professional ESOL, and more to fill labor market gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College prep is an unfilled gap, with a need for ESOL potentially combined with basic general education: "It's a bridge area that doesn't have much . . . Ascentria is working with the tech in Concord to do a college preparation class." – K011</li> <li>• Vocational ESOL: some classes are going on at IINE and there are other examples, including the apprenticeship program for the community colleges.</li> <li>• Workplace English classes where employers subsidize the time and/or the training.</li> <li>• ESOL students in college and universities also seek support in conversational English and improving their accents via practice with native speakers.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Potential/ suggested role of SNHU	Most key informants were unsure how to answer the question of what SNHU could do to fill gaps in the ESOL landscape, partially because most people were unsure of the role they currently play, and wanted to know what resources were actually available. Several KIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-academic classes that fill the gap between advanced ESOL at places like the Institute and college-level ESOL at places like UNH.</li> </ul>

	<p>noted that there is already a feeling of competition for limited resources. However, once pressed to think about a role if SNHU came to the table with resources, KIs noted specific ESOL recommendations listed here as potential areas where SNHU could play a role. One person suggested that the Center for New Americans could function as a sort of welcome center or broader immigrant center in Manchester. Participants tended to think about SNHU from the university perspective, and several highly educated participants noted they were seeking pathways to re-enter their field of expertise as soon as they could learn enough English.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When asked what they currently know about the Center for New Americans, one person said, “It is a beautiful facility, but I don’t have an existing relationship . . . Manchester needs an immigrant center . . . I don’t really know what they are trying to do.” – K011</li> <li>• Leveraging the skills and expertise of professors at SNHU to develop industry specific ESOL classes for people seeking to advance in their field: “I think the professors maybe at SNHU because our teachers are language teachers, English teachers but those professors are accountant or chemistry teachers, they know the content and they know what we need to teach the students, they can come together to develop a course.” – K007</li> </ul>
Theme	Description	Quotes
<b>Motivations and reported outcomes from additional English skills</b>		
Involvement in children’s lives and education	Participants are willing to learn English so that they may participate in their children's life and education.	“Going to the doctors’, to the clinic—I have three children and for emergencies or something for my children, I get frustrated not being able to communicate how my children feel.” – FG002

		<p>"It is beautiful to learn English. Going to the doctor's, school meetings with my children's teacher, or even for jobs, I always needed English to communicate so it is important." – FG010</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Community integration	ESOL programs give participants more opportunities to succeed.	"I'm happy for this ESL program, which allowed me to learn English. And because I learned the language, many opportunities opened up for me." – S006
Access to resources	Participants believe that education and learning English provide them with more resources and open doors for them.	<p>"The English language can really open doors for anyone who wants to learn and to know more about the world." – S009</p> <p>"Especially here, I believe it's very important for us to be educated so that we could know about all the things, we could understand what's going on." – FG013</p>
Reduced stress/increased confidence	Participants feel that with time, they get more comfortable speaking and understanding what others say.	"With the course, I feel more confident speaking. Before, I felt intimidated to

		<p>speak. Now, it is easier to understand what people are saying.” – FG005</p> <p>One woman described working at a job when she first arrived in Manchester and feeling “not good,” and “nervous” to go to work because the people there were impatient with her English. She worked hard on pronunciation skills and now feels “very good” about her English, but she also wishes that her coworkers had been more understanding and patient with her from the beginning, which would have reduced her stress and enabled her to learn in a more relaxed setting on the job. – FG014</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Survival	Participants learn English in order to survive in the United States, as English is required in their daily lives.	“We need to stay here in the USA. To stay here and to communicate properly, it’s very important to know how to write and read English and also how to speak English so that we can survive.” – FG013
Wellness / health	Because immigrants are not accepted as they are, English learners are under pressure to speak English correctly and without an accent.	“Everywhere I go, I have to bring my personal translator, my daughter . . . to go to the doctor. I would feel independent if I knew English.” – FG001

	Several participants also mentioned doctor's appointments as vital settings where they wish they could communicate better in English.	"ESOL classes were definitely helpful but I felt like it was putting more pressure on me on top of studying that I was doing something wrong, I had to be this way, you have to lose your accent, it was so much pressure for me." – S004
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Discrimination	Participants noted that they face discrimination as a result of a lack of English and immigrant presence in the country.	"Where I live, there is a lot of Americans and not a lot of Latinos. There is a lot of racism because there is not a lot of Latinos. And not knowing English is hard." – FG002
Better employment	Participants take English classes to find better employment opportunities and to advance in their careers.	<p>"I think a lot of it is being motivated to learn. It's like, if I am going to live here then I might as well learn English so I can have better job opportunities." – FG010</p> <p>"I feel pressure because in my job, if I know English perfectly, I will advance in the corporation, but I am not able to." – FG002</p> <p>"You can't find better opportunities for work because of limitations of the language." – FG001</p>

Quality of life	Participants see English as a vehicle for improved quality of life overall, as it opens opportunities for travel, hobbies, communicating with people from all over the world (including making meaningful connections with other immigrants), and being able to express themselves fully and authentically.	<p>One participant noted that he is much funnier in his native language and wishes to maintain that ability to joke around and be himself in a way that he has never been able to achieve in English. – FG009</p> <p>One participant appreciated being able to make connections with other immigrants from all over the world in classes and at work and noted that English is the universal language that allows them to connect. – FG011</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
<b>Referrals</b>		
Methods of discovering classes	<p>Participants learn about classes from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Churches</li> <li>• Refugee resettlement agencies/caseworkers</li> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Doctor's offices and clinics</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Benefits enrollment offices</li> <li>• Word-of-mouth (friends, family, and community members)</li> </ul>	<p>“The hospital where they work at helped them with English classes.” – FG008</p> <p>“So basically, we joined this class from the office. Our caseworker helped us to learn more about these classes and they helped us to get enrolled in these classes.” – FG013</p> <p>Participants in one focus group explained that their supervisors told them about ESOL courses through their job, and they are free. They get one or two groups a</p>

		<p>year. Classes can be both outside of the work schedule, and some of them in work schedule. In the case of the participants some of them are in class during their work time and some of them are not depending at what shift they work. – FG005</p> <p>“I always ask how they got the information and they would say from friends and family.” – K007</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
<b>Resources</b>		
Hoped-for / recommendations	<p>Participants wish for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More locations that provide English education to people who reside outside of the city due to transportation issues</li> <li>• More options for classes outside of the existing hours.</li> <li>• Some participants preferred hybrid and online or asynchronous learning opportunities, while others were unfamiliar with technology or did not have the tools they needed to take these types of classes.</li> <li>• Tech resources such as computers or tablets, and support and classes that introduce English</li> </ul>	<p>“There is a need for more places that are not churches. Having other options of places to go—a lot of the places are in the middle of the city and for those who live far away and don’t have transportation, it becomes complicated to get there.” – FG002</p> <p>Participants noted that more people are moving to Hooksett, Londonderry, Bedford, Derry, etc. and they want to make sure they can continue to access courses. – FG014</p>

	<p>language learners to online class options, could open opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few key informants want businesses to play a larger role in ESOL, offering resources to employees and vocabulary that is specific to their industry.</li> <li>• Participants who have never worked with a caseworker or any organization expressed wanting help navigating U.S. culture and everyday life (such as registering kids for school, knowing where to go to get health insurance, benefits, and other basic orientation issues).</li> <li>• Career- and sector-specific connections to business associations, training opportunities, mentoring and internships, and career advancement or apprenticeships.</li> </ul>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Autonomy and power	<p>Nearly all the students and community members we spoke to were grateful that this project is being done, and many of the English language learners noted that they are never asked for their opinions. One person noted that when they are asked for their opinion, it can feel superficial and they often do not see the any evidence of the changes they recommended.</p> <p>Participants appreciated the design of this study and would like to know what comes of it.</p>	<p>“One more thing I want to add is to see how the authority in Manchester, or people who have the resources can understand us and know what we want because sometimes when we say, “We want this one, support us this way,” they don’t do it, and that’s what I want to add.” – FG012</p>

Theme	Description	Quotes
<b>Learning environments and pedagogies</b>		
Online/at-home learning	<p>Participants have mixed feelings about Zoom/online learning. On one hand, online classes eliminate the need to go in person, which removes the barrier of transportation. However, participants shared that they find it much more difficult to concentrate during online classes due to distractions that occur at home. Overall, participants preferred in-person classes due to the quality of education and interaction with teachers. Providers and participants spoke about how COVID-19 changed the landscape for ESOL classes temporarily—everything went online—and how some programs did not fully return to in person.</p>	<p>“It is harder to do it at home where you can get distracted with other house things.” – FG005</p> <p>“The video is not as good as teachers who are kind and patient to teach and go over things again.” – FG002</p>
Small group or 1:1, with specific levels	<p>Small group and individualized instruction are considered ideal—one person described having 1:1 class in a library, which advanced their English comprehension and pronunciation very quickly. Participants prefer being with other students at the same level, both because it is less intimidating to learn in those settings, and also because they can learn faster when the curriculum is at their level. In addition, some learners have participated in conversation cafes or other encounters where they can practice with native English speakers. They consistently had positive feedback about these opportunities and felt that they</p>	<p>“When all students are at your level, it is less intimidating.” – FG002</p>

	were vital for improving pronunciation, while the classroom setting is best for learning grammar, vocabulary, and the structure of the language.	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
<b>Bilingual/multilingual life in New Hampshire</b>		
Challenges with speaking no/little English upon arrival	Participants were surprised to learn that other languages were rarely spoken in Manchester, even within larger communities such as Spanish-speaking communities. Others observed that interpreters are not the best because some context is lost during translation.	<p>"And what I surprise when I settled down here in Manchester—no one spoke Spanish. Looking for a job or getting any type of assistance was challenging because there was not interpreters or people that spoke my language here." – S008</p> <p>"I haven't had the opportunity to learn a lot because I came here as a single mom, but I have learned a little bit." – FG001</p> <p>"Even with translators, sometimes they are from some other country, and words change in one country or the other. So, it is complicated for the translator to communicate well with the nurse or the doctor for me when they are not from my native country and words may have a different meaning for them." – FG002</p>

		<p>"It's very obvious that at least one of our family members need to be highly educated. Since our birth, we did not have any kind of chance to be educated and this is the reason we do not know how to deal with everything." – FG013</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Degree of welcoming / sense of belonging / discrimination	<p>ESOL learners' experiences with feeling welcomed and belonging differed, with some expressing sadness and frustration due to not speaking English comfortably enough to relate to native-born residents who only speak English. Others shared that they observe English-speakers being understanding of the fact that the ESOL learners might not know English fully; they do not feel that people make fun of them or try to make them feel embarrassed. Several highly educated participants who had learned English formally in their country of origin were frustrated to be unable to work in their fields or occupations but were working diligently to re-learn English in Manchester and develop their conversational fluency and industry-specific vocabulary to be able to retrain or re-certify in their field here in the United States.</p>	<p>"In the 30 years I have been here, I have tried to learn. But being shy has made it hard, and people laughing at me has made it harder. I understand a little bit but it is very hard." – FG010</p> <p>"It takes a while to feel welcomed, and with the English is just frustrating because I don't understand." – FG002</p> <p>"We start to think, 'What did they say? Did they get mad at me for not understanding?'" – FG002</p>

<p>Importance of retaining native language / cultural connections to home / Intergenerational</p>	<p>Although participants consider English valuable, this does not negate their desire to maintain and/or strengthen their native language and connections to culture. In particular, intergenerational family dynamics and a desire to feel authentically themselves motivate people to continue to communicate in their native language with family, friends, and community members while simultaneously learning English. Most participants noted that being bi-lingual or multi-lingual enriches their lives.</p>	<p>“Portuguese is my essence, my identity, to the extent that you can't take it out of me. But English opens doors.” – FG009</p> <p>One participant described how her daughter doesn't want to speak their native language anymore. She is determined to teach it to her so that she can connect with her grandmother and other family members, but her daughter speaks almost exclusively English. – FG014</p>
<p><b>Theme</b></p>	<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p>
<p>Learning English as a process / continuum</p>	<p>English learners feel that learning English is a journey and process that takes a long time. Key informants also noted that the process of English learning is unique to each individual and is something that depends on a lot of external factors (such as the person's existing levels of education, supports at home, type of work, etc.). Even folks who arrived in the United States having studied English formally in their home countries described a long and ongoing process of learning. One is never “done” learning a language and many participants joked about how hard it was to retain new information within the context of the complexity of their lives (displacement, jobs, kids, health issues, trauma, etc.).</p>	<p>“It has taken me so long to learn English. I have taken [English classes] all over the states I have lived, and I still need to learn more.” – FG010</p> <p>“English is my second language. I learned English in China but it wasn't the same way we learn English here.” – K007</p> <p>“When trying to speak, it is hard to put the words where they belong in order to get the message across. But I would say basics, for emergencies, I could communicate if I ever needed to.” – FG005</p>

		<p>"Your brain is a colander. We make spaghetti, you put the spaghetti in and all the water . . . Some things stay, but not everything." – FG011</p>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Learning through work	<p>Participants spoke about being given a "chance" in situations where they knew they were qualified for jobs, but their English skills were not yet as high as they would like. Some employers were willing to hire participants in this situation because they could see the benefit of their existing knowledge of the field, or their sheer dedication and motivation to learn, knowing that they would learn on the job. This was consistently the fastest way that people described learning English.</p>	<p>"The English that I have learned is mostly through the clients that I have at work." – FG001</p> <p>"I worked with only Americans from the beginning, and I learned to speak with them enough to get by." – FG009</p> <p>"When I was in my country, I was a biology teacher. I start an application with school district [here in Manchester] and I say, "I want to work . . . I need to learn English," and they give one chance for me and I started the paraprofessional teacher." – FG011</p>
Learning through TV and other media	<p>Participants found that they could also learn English by watching movies or TV in English. One participant read and listened to the news daily and felt they learned the most that way.</p>	<p>"If you have to watch a movie, watch it in English." – S001</p>

Theme	Description	Quotes
Othering and misjudging	Some participants have felt othered by English-speaking Americans for having a different accent.	<p>"When you slowly talk to people you get adjusted, now I feel like I am more confident if my accent pops up compared to before." – S004</p> <p>"I attended [university] immediately going to the country, and they enrolled me in the ESOL classes, and I fought that back, I was like, 'You know what, I do know English, it's just that I'm adapting to different environments of learning how to fluently speak English.'" – S004</p>

## Appendix A: Study Methods

LZC worked closely with SNHU and Equity Collective to co-develop research questions and priorities, produce the key informant interview and ESOL learner focus group guides, and conduct outreach. EqColl contracted with five community researchers who are leaders and have existing networks in Latine, Vietnamese, and African immigrant communities.

Throughout the project, LZC met regularly with SNHU and EqColl to move the project forward. We also coordinated several in-person and virtual meetings with all partners to establish and maintain rapport, share initial findings, and discuss and gather input on key questions related to the study. At one of these meetings, SNHU gave LZC and EqColl a tour of the Center for New Americans, which helped to ground the research team in the physical space and see the ample resources available to the community at the Center. Although each organization in this partnership offered a different vantage point for this assessment, all members of this collective team shared the goals of improving ESOL access and quality for English language learners in Manchester. Our final meeting took place in January 2024 and focused on ensuring maximum clarity and utility of the results presented in this thematic analysis for SNHU's original project goals.

**Storytelling:** EqColl spearheaded the storytelling portion of this project. First, they held a training session with five community researchers, some of whom gave permission for their stories to be utilized as data for this project. The community researchers then facilitated their own storytelling sessions with supervision and guidance from EqColl. In these sessions, the community researchers collected stories from community members about their experiences as English language learners and/or immigrants in New Hampshire. A total of 15 ESOL learners gave permission for LZC to use their stories as qualitative data for this project. All stories were guided by the following prompt: *"Tell us a story about your experience as an English language learner in Manchester, New Hampshire."*

**Key informant interviews:** LZC, EqColl, and SNHU created the inclusion and exclusion criteria and an initial sample list of potential key informants. LZC also utilized snowball sampling, taking recommendations from key informants of people they felt may be instructive to the study. We interviewed a total of 11 key informants, with at least one participant each from government, education, nonprofit provider, and nonprofit

immigrant led organizations (see **Table 1**). Themes from this stage of the research are included in the findings below, and the perspectives of key informants also helped us to prioritize key questions for participant focus groups.

**Table 1. Key Informant Sample: Organizations**

Sector	Number of key informants
Government	2
Education	3
Nonprofit provider	5
Nonprofit Immigrant led	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

**Focus groups:** EqColl worked with the community researchers to assist with recruitment of ESOL learners. LZC and SNHU also recruited focus group participants by contacting the network of ESOL providers in Manchester and visiting classes. Data collection took place in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Kinyarwanda, and Rohingya. Focus groups that were held in other languages were either analyzed in-language or back translated to English for analysis. ESOL learners who participated in interviews and focus groups came from all over the world, a testament to Manchester’s important role as a refugee resettlement hub and migration destination—and the need for extensive, supportive, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant resettlement and integration services, including ESOL classes. In total, the LZC team held 14 focus groups and 1 interview<sup>1</sup> with a total of 83 ESOL learners of various backgrounds and levels (see **Table 2**).

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<sup>1</sup> We conducted a phone interview with an ESOL learner who joined an online focus group but had technical difficulties and was not able to participate in that session.

**Table 2. ESOL Learner Sample: Regions and Countries of Origin**

<b>Region/Country</b>	<b>Number of ESOL Learners</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>25</b>
Democratic Republic of Congo	9
Congo	9
Rwanda	2
Senegal	1
Ivory Coast	1
South Sudan	1
Cameroon	1
Kenya	1
<b>Central and South America</b>	<b>17</b>
Mexico	5
Peru	4
Honduras	2
Brazil	2
Costa Rica	1
El Salvador	1
Colombia	1
Ecuador	1
<b>Asia</b>	<b>15</b>
Myanmar	9
Turkey	4
Vietnam	1
Nepal	1
<b>Caribbean</b>	<b>14</b>
Dominican Republic	7
Puerto Rico	5
Haiti	2
<b>Europe</b>	<b>12</b>
Ukraine	9
Albania	1
Kosovo	1
Russia	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>

**Qualitative Analysis:** LZC created a Dedoose (qualitative analysis software) database that included the interviews, focus groups, and stories. LZC developed an initial codebook and gathered input from SNHU and EqColl at this stage. Audio and written data were coded using deductive methods (based on the codes established by the team) and inductive methods (capturing codes that emerged from the data). LZC created the final thematic analysis by comparing different perspectives, highlighting salient themes, and prioritizing quotes that illustrated either common themes or unique perspectives. The final analysis was reviewed against the original project goals and research questions to ensure that SNHU has sufficient data to substantiate the points they choose to share from this assessment in public reports.

Study activities were completed according to the following timeline:

- Co-developed interview recruitment procedures (including sample, interview guide, and outreach emails) (June 2023)
- Key informant interviews (June–July 2023)
- Key informant interview preliminary themes (July 2023)
- Co-developed revised needs analysis plan (July 2023)
- Co-developed focus group recruitment procedures (including sampling criteria, focus group guide, flyers, screening survey, consent form, and outreach emails) (August 2023)
- ESOL learner focus groups (Sept–Oct 2023)
- Co-developed codebook (November 2023)
- Analysis and write-up (Nov–Dec 2023)